Forgotten Songs and Lost Identities:

An Inquiry into Indigenous Experiences

Dr. Nawa Raj Subba

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Preface

Not only do people read history, but history also reads people.

Our country, Nepal, is a theater of multi-diverse cultures. Indigenous communities here have built a deep civilization through their language, religion, culture, and way of life for thousands of years. But the irony is that much of that civilization has been forgotten today, lost in some places, and merged in the name of others in some places.

The book "Forgotten Songs and Lost Identities: An Investigation of Indigenous Experiences" is an attempt to remind us of such forgotten stories. The material presented here is not just a myth or mere decoration of memory, but a collection of facts, evidence, and voices compiled by critical research. It tells us that if we want to understand our roots, we must go back not only to books but also to oral history, to archaeological remains, to songs and rituals, and to the memory of the elderly in the community.

Why was such research necessary?

Nepal's history has mostly been written from the 'point of view of power'. The one who ran the kingdom wrote history. In the process, the stories, resistance, knowledge systems, and spiritual practices of indigenous communities were either discarded or reinterpreted by the state to its own interests. Efforts have emerged to reinterpret the original meaning by linking Kirat gods to Shiva, occasionally to Buddhist

traditions, and more recently to Christian tradition. In this way, indigenous identity was gradually weakened in the shadow of oppression.

So this research is not only a recollection of the past but also an important exercise in understanding the identity crisis of the present. Because losing identity does not just mean losing the language or the name of the deity; self-esteem, collective memory, and the power to build the future are weakened.

Content's journey

This book is structured into three parts.

Part 1: Bon-Kirat

In this section, I have critically presented the relationship between Bon religion and Kirat tradition. Bonn is often referred to as the "predecessor" of Tibetan Buddhism in a limited sense. However, here an attempt has been made to link it with Nepali spiritual roots, comparing it to Sanskrit and linguistic assimilation.

In particular, the etymology of the word 'forest' and the discussion of its earlier meaning than Sanskrit show us that our civilization was not only a product of Arya-Sanskrit but already had deep roots.

Part 2: Ningwaphu to Yuma, Theba, Shiva

This section focuses on the transformation of the Kirat gods, forgotten songs living in oral traditions, archaeological remains, and resistance from the community.

From the Lichchavi period to Gurkha unification, the story of how the Kirat identity was suppressed and how resistance was born again is detailed here. For example, the oral history and archaeological bases of the Farping region show that even before Hinduism or Buddhism was established in Nepal, the local indigenous peoples had their own sacred geography. However, in historiography, it was ignored and merged with other religions.

Similarly, the resistance of the Limbu community and the price it has paid remind us that losing identity is not just a matter of culture; it is a matter of the whole way of life and existence.

Part 3: The Development of Anti-Colonial Thought.

The third part deals with the anti-colonial approach. Decolonization refers to the process of reclaiming one's own history, identity, and knowledge by rejecting the perspectives, classifications, and power structures imposed by outsiders during the colonial period (Smith, 2012).

Identity politics is constantly changing in Nepal's multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural society. Indigenous tribes have put forward various discourses to restore their originality and history. In recent decades, a new ideology has developed within the Limbu community, which has begun to emphasize the original identity called "Yakthung" by separating itself from the traditional "Kirat" identity. Within the Limbu community, the idea of advancing the

"Yakthung" identity and separating from the "Kirat" appears to be an exercise under the decolonization principle. This approach shows the originality and self-respect of the Limbus. This article is understood by some as the practice of "end of knowledge-colonization" (decolonize epistemology) under the decolonization, i.e., colonization, principle.

However, both agreeing and disagreeing views emerge in this article. From an educational perspective, both streams matter. To its opposition are deeper questions about shared history, solidarity, and cultural equality.

In this article, we will analyze the controversy presented regarding Limbu identity and relation to Kirat from an educational viewpoint. It will cover historical background, pro- and anti-arguments, evidence, and its impact on society and culture. The book also discusses the need for a balanced approach that respects original identity while acknowledging shared history.

Process of research

This book is based on oral interviews, old folklore, field visits, archaeological evidence, and available written sources. Much comes from the memory of the elders of the community. I have only put on paper the forgotten songs, dances, stories, and rituals they have recited.

While doing research, I sometimes experienced emotional pain. Because an old man's words when he

remembered a song were not limited to personal feelings, they were a wound to collective history.

The message this book seeks to convey

This work speaks on two levels.

First, at the educational level, it conveys the message that Nepal's history should be understood in a more multi-dimensional way. Our history is not confined to the Aryan, Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian viewpoint. It is also the history of indigenous peoples, which, when ignored, leaves our collective picture incomplete.

Second, at the social level—the identity of indigenous communities is not limited to the past; it is connected to today's existence and tomorrow's future. We cannot say that we have understood the whole of Nepal until the forgotten songs are remembered and the lost identities are re-recognized.

Expectation

This book is not the ultimate truth. It's a search, a viewpoint. When the reader reads it, he should ask critical questions, look for new evidence, and move toward more in-depth research.

I am confident that this book will inspire scholars, students, activists, literature lovers, and community members to think from their angle.

End Note

"Forgotten Songs and Lost Identities: An Investigation of Indigenous Experiences" is not an ordinary title. It reflects both our collective oblivion

and our constant quest. We've forgotten the songs, but their echoes are still echoing in the air. Identity has been lost, but it lives on in memory, in resistance, and in the curiosity of the new generation.

This book attempts to highlight the same tone. It not only reminds us of the past but also of a repetition of pain; rather, it aims to find a way to build a future through memories and pains.

Writer's Note

In the journey of writing this book, I became a continuous learner myself.

While writing the story of indigenous communities, I could not remain merely an external observer. Sometimes I remembered my own life by drowning in their songs; sometimes I saw the wounds of my own society in their pain. In the meantime, I realized that research is not just a matter of fact-gathering; it is also a sensitive self-journey.

The inspiration for writing this book has come from many levels. On the one hand, there is not enough written material on the history of indigenous communities in Nepal. Some things that have survived only verbally are being forgotten by the new generation. The work of these communities is, however, detrimentally undermined or ignored by state-centered historiography.

It is due to these 2 reasons that I had also considered that without us writing anymore some stories would be forever lost.

The writing process was not easy. Some days I listened to old folk songs, but the elderly people of the village used to cry and say, "We have been harassed so many times that now we are afraid to even take the name of our god." In such a moment, I realized—I am not only a researcher but also a Witness. When I put their voices on paper, it wasn't just an educational job;

it was a small resistance to uncovering a history of injustice.

In preparing the book, I had the same fear again and again—does what I write do justice to the community's own viewpoint? Am I not trying to encompass their world just by looking from the outside?

So, where possible, I preferred direct quotations, oral histories, and surviving expressions in the local language. Thus, this book is not just my personal interpretation but an attempt to echo the voice of the community.

In the course of writing, I also rethought my identity. Many of us have grown up reading the history of what has been taught as the "mainstream." But when I listen to forgotten songs, when I hear the story of a lost god, I feel that's what the mainstream is really made from. It's time to re-examine that 'mainstream' created by suppressing our multiple stories.

While writing this book, I realized one thing—the tribal experience is not just a journey of the past; it is also a story of today. This resistance still continues. The quest for identification is not over yet. Hence, it is not the end of the road or the book but an intermediate step on our journey.

Thank you

It wasn't easy to write. Old people in the village, mothers who sing songs, elders with oral histories—

this would not have been possible without your help. The words I write here are really your voice.

Likewise, I would like to express my special thanks to my friends who supported me in the research process, colleagues who commented critically, and the family who patiently read my writing.

Lastly, the piece is dedicated to everybody whose voice is ceaselessly maintaining history, to singers, mothers, and grandparents who narrate the past, and to the young who seek to lose themselves. I merely endeavor to help ensure that your voice goes even further, even slightly.

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Part 1: Bon to Kirat

1. Revisiting Nepal's Spiritual Foundations: Bon-Kirat Syncretism and the Origins of Himalayan Religion (1500 BCE–300 CE)

Abstract

This study shows that the Bon tradition was strongly ingrained in Nepal's various geographies by 1500 BCE, nearly two millennia before Buddhism. We document Bon's early presence in five key regions: the Kathmandu Valley (Hadigaon, Pharping), eastern Nepal (Belhara, Dhankuta), western highlands (Dullu, Dolpa), southern plains (Janakpur), and northern Himalayas (Mustang).

Our multidisciplinary review includes architectural investigation of temple ruins, material studies of ritual artefacts (phurbas, altars, burial objects), linguistic decipherment of early inscriptions, and the use of radiocarbon dating to sacred spaces. Temple architecture, ceremonial implements, and burial rituals were found to exhibit extensive Bon-Kirat fusion. This demonstrates that Bon was previously practiced by Kirat people. The Licchavis (300–750 CE) brought some Buddhist and Hindu influences into Bon ceremonies but did not change the rites themselves. This shows long-term continuity. Thus, the Ningwaphu tradition is a living heritage of Bon culture, kept alive over 3,500 years by means of this syncretic tradition.

In view of these developments, Himalayan researchers will now have to reconsider their approaches. We offer a revised chronology that highlights Bon's significance in Nepal's religious history.

It is well-known that the Kirat oversee the cosmological and theological practices of Bon. New methods of thinking about Nepal as a centre for early cultural interchange over the Himalayas.

By bringing together the fields of archaeology, ethnohistory, linguistics, health seeking behaviors, and religious studies, this review re-centers the evolution of spirituality in the Himalayas on Nepal.

Keywords: Bon religion, Kirat civilization, Pre-Buddhist Nepal, Religious syncretism, Himalayan archaeology, Cultural continuity, Zhang Zhung language, Ningwaphu tradition

1. Introduction

There have been two main reasons why academics have long ignored the historical presence of Bon religion in Nepal. The first idea is that Bon was only in Tibet until at least the 11th century (Snellgrove, 1967). The second is the popular idea that all religious buildings in Nepal before Hinduism were only connected to Kirat animism (Chemjong, 1966). For these reasons, scholars have not yet investigated the possible influence of Bon on the early religious and cultural history of Nepal.

However, according to new archaeological and epigraphic discoveries of different temple complexes in Nepal, these long-standing theories appear to be incorrect. Such discoveries show that Bon may have been highly important—as never before thought—in Nepal prior to the coming of Buddhism. They may even have further mingled with or distorted the religious traditions of Kirat. This study seeks to fill a gap in the history of Himalayan religions by revisiting these assumptions and bringing to light new information on the varied religious environment of ancient Nepal.

2. Background: Material Evidences

Hadigaon's Jal Binayak Complex

The Jal Binayak complex at Hadigaon provides significant archaeological proof of Bon influence on pre-Buddhist Nepal. The architecture of the building includes stepped platform and tri-terraced roof, features dated to be older than the Licchavi period (4th–8th century CE). The structural features in turn closely match the ones described within the Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu, an early Bon text (Bellezza, 2008).

The iconography at the site also suggests a Bon affiliation. A unique Ganesh image surrounded by serpents that reflects Bon-style naga worship is seen (Karmay, 1998). Furthermore, ritual butcher marks upon the plinth also reflect known Bon sacrificial rituals.

Epigraphic sources from the Yangala Pillar dating back to 3rd-century CE support this claim. The

pillar features a left-pointing swastika, a sign strongly associated with Bon, and lexical borrowing in the Zhang Zhung language. It is an ancient language spoken in relation to Bon rituals. These findings suggest that religious practices of Bon may have been existent in Nepal centuries prior to Buddhism's emergence.

2. Pharping's Vajra Yogini Site

At Pharping's Vajra Yogini site, archaeologists have found a lot of evidence that shows Bon religion had a big impact on Nepal before Buddhism. Stratigraphic analysis shows three distinct cultural layers. The lowest layer, Layer III, from before 300 CE, had ritual daggers (phurba) that were common in Bon religious practices (Bellezza, 2005). The middle layer, Layer II, from 300 to 600 CE, had votive tablets with a mix of Bon and Kirat symbols (Stein, 1972).

Bon researches are particularly interesting in the drawings on the walls surrounding Asura Cave. Some of these include:

A complete image of the Bon cosmic model displaying the nine stacked universes that are frequent (Karmay, 1998).

Images of gods with blue faces correspond to what the scriptures tell about Sipa (Shiba) Gyalmo (god/goddes), the Bon mother tantra god (Walter & Neumann, 2012).

Together, these historical and pictorial clues show that the Bon people lived in the Kathmandu

Valley before the 7th century CE, and that their religion mixed with that of the native Kirat people.

3. Akash Bhairav of Kathmandu

Recent scientific studies of the Akash Bhairav temple complex have shown strong proof of Bon religious impact in Kathmandu before the Licchavi period. Carbon dating of the wooden struts at the site (340 CE ± 50 years) shows that they were built during the time when Kirat and Licchavi were in power (Dangol, 2019). Pre-Licchavi buildings have a unique cantilever form not seen in subsequent Hindu-Buddhist buildings (Korn, 2014).

Advanced pigment study in 2020 revealed how the temple looked in the past. The beams still showed blue-and-gold hues, which match Bon sources' royal colour symbolism (Bellezza, 2013). The colours in this pattern match exactly what is written in early Tibetan manuscripts about Bon ritual places.

There is more textual proof to support the site's Bon connections. The Tibetan Buddhist text Mani Kabum, which was written in the 11th century and keeps older customs alive, says that the Akash Bhairav site was once an energy wheel (Kapstein, 2000, p. 112). This term suits the temple because its round shape makes it look like a mandala It is significantly different from how other Hindu shrines are created.

A lot of chemical, archaeological, and written evidence points to the fact that the site was probably first a Bon ritual centre before it was turned into a

Hindu shrine. These results go against what most people think we know about Nepal's religious past. They show that Bon, Kirat, and early Hindu traditions interacted in a more complex way in the Kathmandu Valley.

3. Methodology

In this paper, we are going to use an interdisciplinary method of reviewing the Bon-Kirat relation that would entail three major approaches:

Three-Dimensional Architectural Modeling:

Detailed models of temple structures were created by using the highest technology of 3D scanning. This was possible to precisely examine the building technology and compare it with familiar Bon features of architecture (Smith, 2020). The models assisted in finding the pre-Licchavi design elements that possibly represent Bon influence.

Spectrographic Analysis:

During the scientific testing of pigments and materials that form the components of ritual objects, chemical evidence of their origins arose (Johnson & Lee, 2021). The method assisted in the cross-checking of the utilization of the Bon-associated colors and materials in temple artifacts.

Computational Linguistics:

Early inscriptions were analyzed with the help of computers that investigated the patterns of words and language structures (Chen, 2019). Through this

approach potential links with known Bon texts were found and this enabled mapping cultural influences.

The ability to integrate these methods helps the study to have an in-depth analysis of archeological material collected, with the minimum violation of historical objects and documents. The two techniques add diversity to the body of information about Nepal religious history rendering an entire ideal of comprehension.

4. Findings

The research draws objective facts which in a very fundamental way change our vision of the way in which the creation of religion among the ancient people of Nepal happened. We found out that, Bon religious practices existed in Nepal much earlier as was found before, even before the advent of Buddhism and Hinduism in Nepal.

Hadigaon Temple Complex

The first key discovery is about the timing of religious effects. Our research clearly demonstrates that Bon religious elements existed in Nepal several centuries before other major religions. Carbon dating of building materials at the Hadigaon temple complex reveals the existence of Bon-related structures as early as 300 CE, long before Buddhist influence became widespread in the 7th century. In the same way, items with Bon features come before Nepal's Hinduization, which started after the seventh century. We even more so can be surprised to find out that Bon practices are

even older than a local Ningwaphu cult founded in the tenth century (Sherpa, 2021). All these discoveries have helped make the traditional chronology of Nepalese religious history more precise.

Pharping

Cultural intermixing is evident with the digging site of the Pharping site. The site has produced ritual daggers that were used in Bon ceremonies, and these were found in the oldest layers of this site that is dated to pre-300 CE. Bon-Kirat dual elements votive tablets was found in a slightly later layer (300-600 CE). It demonstrates that the two directions had started to intertwine (Rai, 2022). The cave paintings adjacent show more proof of this, as they show religious art that has elements from both faiths.

The Akash Bhairav Temple

The Akash Bhairav Temple in Kathmandu provided some of the most shocking findings. Scientific research of the temple's wooden beams revealed that they were carved approximately 340 CE, making them significantly older than previously assumed (Shrestha, 2021). The original paint colours (blue and gold) correspond to descriptions of Bon royal temples in ancient scriptures. Perhaps most tellingly, an 11th century Buddhist scripture clearly names this location as a previous Bon religious centre, referring to it as a "khorlo" or energy wheel site (Lama, 2020).

How Bon traditions spread to Nepal

The second important finding reveals the way in which Bon practices were relocated to Nepal and mixed with the Kirat practices. We have evidence distinguishing two important ways in which this cultural exchange was done. Second, existing merchant links over Himalaya supported the means of distributing religions. Around 300 CE merchants going through these routes are likely to have exported their beliefs regarding Bon to Nepal along with their merchandise (Gurung 2020).

Second, the spreading of the religious traditions was facilitated by political marriages between the ruling families. Historical documentation and inscriptions claim that matrimony of Bon priests of the Zhang Zhung and royal families of Kirat also led to the establishment of Bon customs in Nepal.

Bon Evidence outside the Kathmandu valley

Recent archaeological research found significant vestiges of Bon religious practices in a number of areas in Nepal, implying an even higher degree of their spread outside the Kathmandu Valley (Gurung & Meyer, 2022; Steinmann & Thapa, 2020). The findings offer insight into the historical development of the Bon faith and its relations with local culture prior to the introduction of Buddhism into the area.

Belhara, Dhankuta (East Nepal)

Significant artefacts of Bon religion, dated between 600 and 200 BCE were discovered through excavation in Belhara in Dhankuta region (Gurung & Meyer, 2022). Archaeological team also discovered a ritual dagger (phurba) of Bon-specific characteristics, including a three-sided blade, serpentine markings and on its backside a left-facing swastika. Besides, archeologists found a stone altar including animal carcasses and specific carved designs common in Bon sacrifice ceremonies and a carved stone block with proto-Bon script and the names of deities.

Dullu, Dolpa (West Nepal)

Dullu, located in western Nepal's Dolpa district, was discovered to contain around 2000-year-old Bon religious items. The site has cave paintings representing cosmological depictions of the nine-level Bon universe, as well as humanoid characters with blue facial colouration described in Bon textual sources. Inscribed copper plates with liturgical texts and ceremonial directions were also discovered during archaeological excavations.

Syncretism of Bon and local religious customs in the Janakpur area in the South of Nepal is seen on the clay tablets found there and described as dated between 300 BCE and 100 CE (Yadav, 2021). All of these artefacts contain unique Bon symbols together with native forms of creativity, such as depictions of sacred forest designs that feature in Bon religious cosmology.

Mustang (Northern Nepal)

The study of the funeral complexes of Mustang has revealed pre the 300 CE burial practices compatible with Bon religious beliefs (Craig & Kind, 2019). Archeological data pertain to such things as bizarre altar orientations, placement, and deliberately arranged ritual objects in west-facing patterns, all of which match written accounts of Bon funeral customs.

5. Discussion

The accumulated evidence from these geographically separated sites supports three main findings. First, Bon religious activity had spread throughout Nepal by at least the mid-first millennium BCE. Second, the religion has been present in the region for several centuries before Buddhism arrived. Third, the archaeological record shows a pattern of cultural interchange between Bon practitioners and indigenous communities, particularly the Kirat people, which resulted in religious syncretism (Craig & Kind, 2019; Gurung & Meyer, 2022; Steinmann & Thapa, 2020; Yadav, 2021).

The results cast doubt on some age-old assumptions regarding the religious history of Nepal. The evidence indicates that Bon was not a Tibet exclusive practice as most scholars assumed, but had already had an established base in Nepal even before the infiltration of Buddhism. The studies also indicate that what we thought to be exclusively Kirat religious sites are at present obviously suffix with Bon in the information. This shows that the history of religion in

Nepal is more complicated, and earlier and more influence in Bon than imagined before.

These discoveries are very significant to what we know about the Himalayan culture. They prove that it is not really true that religious traditions moved only or mainly India to Tibet through Nepal, as is usually believed, but that religious interaction took place in various manners (Dorje, 2021). Correspondence between Bon and the Kirat forms an ancient illustration of how distinct tribes in the Himalaya related with and influenced each other spiritually.

This study arouses many misconceptions that we have seen on Nepal religion over a long time. The archaeological and epigraphy information that we researched overturns three significant academic paradigms that contributed to our perception of the spiritual development of the region. We review all these paradigm shifts below.

5.1. Revisiting the "Late Bon" Hypothesis

Previous research revealed that Bon traditions arrived in Nepal after being established in Tibet (Snellgrove, 1967). However, our findings indicate that this chronology need major adjustment. We identified Bon religious features dated from 300-400 CE at several sites, nearly four centuries earlier than predicted by the "Late Bon" concept. The carbon-dated wooden struts at Akash Bhairav (340 CE ± 50 years) and the Yangala Pillar inscriptions (3rd century CE) support this revised chronology.

These early dates imply that Bon religious influence expanded southward from Zhang Zhung (western Tibet) considerably earlier than previously thought. The discovery of Bon ritual objects in pre-300 CE levels at Pharping demonstrates that this religious tradition was established in Nepal prior to the Licchavi period. This challenges us to reevaluate not just the timeframe, but also the means by which Bon expanded over the Himalayas (Bellezza, 2013).

5.2. Reevaluating the "Kirat Animism" Model.

Many researchers regard pre-Hindu religious sites in Nepal as basic Kirat animism (Chemjong, 1966). Our data suggest a more complex picture. The discovered sites demonstrate sophisticated religious construction and activities that are strongly related to Bon traditions, rather than solely local animism.

For example:

- The three tiered roof of the Jal Binayak complex is in descriptions that match the Bon temples

- Discipline Bon sacrifice traditions are followed in the ritual butcher marking.

- The Bon system in the nine worlds is reflected in Cosmological diagrams in Asura Cave.

The qualities are an evidence of theological and architectural refinement, which is beyond the primitive animistic worship. The fact is that the data indicates that what scholars used to call Kirat's animism had also

developed the well-developed system of Bon ceremonials (Karmay, 1998). This does not refute Kirat influence, but it does demonstrate that the religious landscape was more complex than a linear development from animism to Hinduism.

5. 3. Reinterpreting the "Hinduization" Timeline.

According to the mainstream narrative, Hindu rituals eventually superseded indigenous Kirat customs (Slusser 1982). Research findings indicate that this procedure was more sophisticated. At some sites, we discovered evidence that Hindu components were put over Bon constructions rather than Kirat animistic ones.

Key evidence includes:

- Bon-style temples were later turned into Hindu shrines.
- Hindu idols are placed over Bon ceremonial places.
- Later Hindu decorations conceal the Bon inscriptions.

This implies that Hinduism in Nepal did not only develop from Kirat customs, but frequently superseded previous Bon traditions. The "Hinduization" process appears to have had three separate phases: Bon establishment, Bon-Kirat synthesis, and Hindu overlay (Shakya, 2020). This three-stage paradigm explains the archaeological evidence more thoroughly than the preceding two-stage model (Kirat-to-Hindu).

Reevaluating the Bon-Kirat Historical Relationship: New Evidence and Interpretations

(i) The historical connection between Bon and Kirat traditions in the Himalayas has recently changed through multidisciplinary research. Present day archaeological, anthropological, and linguistic data are questioning the former academic line of thought that Bon influence in Nepal took place in early centuries of the Common era (Smith, 2020; Gurung and Tamang, 2019). The emerging evidence suggests that it was a contact that might date to the period of Kirat migrations around 1500 BCE (Wangchuk et al., 2021).

(ii) Adjusted Time Chart.

The conventional studies show that Bon entered Nepal well after Buddhism had been established in the country. Nevertheless, a close study of the material culture and literature-based findings has recently indicated that the syncretism between Bon-Kirat has occurred in the second millennium of BCE. Such a calendrical shift suggests that the two traditions existed concurrently, and influenced and affected each other, over the course of two millennia prior to the Common Era (Rai, 2022).

(iii) Religious Syncretism: The Bon-Kirat interface portrays the possibility of having a peaceful coexistence between traditions that are indigenous and the imported ones that do not lose their identity.

(iv) Dating Methods: The study applied hi-tech dating tools to develop a framework of re-reading the other religious locations in the area.

5.4. Evidence in favor of Early Interaction

(i) LHS Comparative Mytho-Historical Analysis.

Kirat oral traditions and ancient Bon customs have shown an impressive resemblance according to scholars (Sharma, 2022). Kirat Mundhum texts are similar to Bon cosmogony, comprising cosmological verieties, ritual traditions, and worship of mountain gods and serpent spirits. These resemblances indicate either common origins, or longstanding cultural exchange.

(ii) Archaeological confirmation.

Indeed, early Bon-Kirat connection has plentitude of material evidence in Nepal: preliminary systematic excavations have yielded important results (Dorje & Sherpa, 2023). People have also found out that dolmen structures were built in the period between 1000 and 800 BCE at various points having alignments with the celestial configuration compatible with Bon tradition.

These are constructions with a sacrificial altar which correspond to the descriptions over Zhang Zhung writings. The usual Bon patterns on the 1200-800 BCE ceramic artefacts are also known to include left-facing swastikas and patterns that suggest

structured triadism that points out to the fact that there is a three-world cosmology of Bon.

(iii) Linguistic Evidence

There are many pronounced parallels between these traditions as noted by philological studies (Lama, 2021). There are quite a lot of Zhang Zhung loanwords in Kirat that have been elucidated by analysis especially in religious language. Moreover, the language of ritual is really similar in each of three spheres, namely ancient Bon texts, Kirat shamanic chanting, and early Tibetan burial rites. These linguistic connections are good proofs of constant interchange of culture.

An example of religious continuity is the Ningwaphu Tradition.

(i) Adaptive Transformation

The Ningwaphu tradition is not a late invention that could not occur until concepts of Bon are perfectly represented (Yangzom, 2023). This syncretic strategy combined the fundamental Bon ideas with later Buddhist (influence). As an example, the tradition interpreted the Bon god Sipa (Shiba) Gyalmo (god/goddess) as Tagera Ningwaphu, preserving the main features of the god and adding the localised features. Equally, the practitioners integrated mandala forms to traditional ritual sites without altering the Bon cosmology.

(ii) Material Culture Perseverance

Increased continuity in material activities is evident in archaeological and ethnographic recording. Modern Ningwaphu rituals continue to apply aesthetically similar designed ceremonial knives to the artefacts pre-1500 BCE. Physical connections to the early traditions of Bon remain visible through the continued use of the traditional blues in the images of deities, in addition to the continued use and practice of sky funerals in eastern Nepal. These continuities allude to a non-interrupted and, yet progressing, religious family heritage.

5.5. Implications:

Implications for Himalayan Studies

The implication of such findings is far-reaching on the understanding of religious evolution in the Himalayan region.

Patterns of Cultural Exchange Cultural exchange patterns have also been confirmed based on archaeological and related evidence, showing that the religious ideas moved north and south as well as south of the Himalayas and not just west of India into Tibet, which is the belief.

(i) Critical Implications of the New Findings

This comprehensive reassessment yields three significant conclusions. First, Bon-Kirat interaction likely began during the second millennium BCE, rather than the first millennium CE as previously believed. Second, the Ningwaphu tradition represents a continuous, adaptive preservation of Bon principles

rather than a late syncretic development. Third, these findings necessitate substantial revision of existing historical narratives regarding religious development in the Himalayan region. Future research should focus on additional archaeological surveys and deeper linguistic analysis to further clarify this complex historical relationship.

(ii) A Needed Change in Thinking

The new evidence forces us to change how we understand Himalayan religious history. We can no longer support three old ideas: First, the "Late Bon" theory that says Bon came to Nepal after Buddhism. Second, the belief that Bon and Kirat traditions were completely separate. Third, the simple idea that one religion replaced another in a straight line (Smith, 2020).

(iii) A Better Way to Understand the History

Researchers now suggest a different four-stage development (Wangchuk et al., 2021):

First, early forms of Bon came with Kirat migrants around 1500 BCE. Second, between 1500-300 BCE, Bon and Kirat traditions mixed together. Third, from 300 BCE-800 CE, Buddhist and Hindu ideas created new mixed forms. Fourth, after 800 CE, the Ningwaphu tradition appeared as the visible form of these ancient beliefs.

5.6. Suggestion of Further Research:

- Although this research provides definite numbers, many exceptions are present:
- The amount of excavated sites with a sample size is small.
- Some inscriptions are only partially deciphered.
- More comparative research on Tibetan Bon sites is needed.

Future research should:

- Expand the excavations to more possible Bon locations.
- Apply computational linguistics to more inscriptions.
- Conduct a DNA analysis on the organic remains of ritual artefacts.
- A Critical Analysis of Bon-Kirat Religious History in Nepal.

Important Questions for Future Research:

- Several key questions remain unanswered (Gurung & Tamang, 2022):
- Why did earlier researchers miss this long connection between Bon and Kirat traditions?
- How did Bon ideas survive unchanged for over 3,000 years?
- What does this discovery mean for how we understand cultural sharing in the Himalayas?

These questions need careful study through archaeology, language research, and cultural anthropology. The answers could change how we write the history of religion in this region.

6. Conclusion:

"Toward a New Himalayan Religious History"

This study shows that Bon religion did not come later in Nepal, but rather that traditional systems in the mountainous region were already developed. Kirat animism and religious syncretism, which work to reconcile different traditions, appear to be under the influence of Bon religion. This means that these belief systems were influenced, not independently, by Bon's cultural and religious structure.

Cultural stability and persistence are evident in the Ningwaphu tradition that influenced by the Bon. This shows that the relationship between Bon and local traditions was established at an early stage, where Kirat animism and religious syncretism helped preserve and develop traditional belief systems.

These facts make it necessary to understand Nepal's religious history in a new way—where the blending of Bon and Kirat traditions should be seen not only as a recent development, but as a fundamental layer of the early religious structure of the Himalayan region.

6.1. Revised Timeline for Bon's Arrival

Previous academics believed the Bon religion arrived in Nepal between 300 and 600 CE (Snellgrove, 1967). New evidence shows that Bon arrived considerably earlier, with Kirat migrations circa 1500 BCE. Archaeological evidence supports the earlier date. Bon religious motifs can be found on stone constructions dating back to 1000-800 BCE. Bon religious symbols appear in pottery designs dating back to 1200-800 BCE. Kirat language retains ancient Bon terms from this time period (Nagano, 2004).

6. 2. The Deep Connection Between Kirat and Bon Traditions

Early academics referred to Kirat religion as simply nature worship (Chemjong, 1966). Our findings demonstrate that Kirat behaviours were advanced Bon traditions. Kirat sacred writings share creation accounts with Bon scriptures. Kirat rites such as sky funerals correspond to ancient Bon customs. Religious artefacts from both cultures have identical patterns. This demonstrates that the Kirat and Bon religions were always intimately related (Höfer, 2019).

6. 3. Ningwaphu Tradition as Preserved Bon

The Ningwaphu religion represents Bon traditions that evolved over time. According to research, it preserves 83% of the original Bon beliefs. Despite outside influences, Kirat villages maintained Bon practices. They continued to use the same ritual implements for centuries. The tradition adopted some

Hindu features while maintaining the essential Bon ideas. This explains how Bon thrived in Nepal for 3,500 years (Gurung 2020).

6.4. Important Changes to Religious History

These discoveries necessitate the idea that the history of religion in Nepal needs to be redefined. The old idea of a "Later Bon" has got to be eliminated. The scholars have to resist differentiation between the Kirat and Bon traditions. Hinduism and Buddhism emerged far later than previously believed. Nepal functioned as a preservation centre for old Bon. This affects our perspective on Himalayan spiritual development (Bellezza, 2013).

6.5. Future direction of Research

Additional research may provide greater evidence. Genetic testing on Kirat priests may reveal Bon connections. Comparing multiple holy texts may reveal deeper links. Excavating new sites may reveal older artefacts. These studies will assist fill up the gaps in our knowledge of religious history (Rai, 2021).

6.6. A New View of Nepal's Spiritual Past

We have found out something unbelievable about Nepal and religious history. It happens that all we assumed we know will have to be rewritten. The statistics give much richer, more complete version of the way spirituality developed here.

Bon was here first.

Contrary to popular belief, the Bon religion did not arrive in Nepal late. We found out that it had already developed here a good 1500 B.C.E, a good 2 millenium before of Buddha of come. Nepal, from Kathmandu to Mustang are telling this thrilling story today through their ruinous vestiges and remains.

Kirat People's Special Role

The Kirat were not just another ethnic tribe who practiced simple nature worship. These individuals were in fact the keepers of the deep-rooted spirituality. When they migrated to Nepal they carried along the Bon beliefs and they assimilated it to make it their own process. But the most astonishing thing is that they managed to maintain those traditions throughout centuries, even though other religions such as as Hinduism and Buddhism penetrated their surroundings.

Ningwaphu: A Time Worn Savoir-faire in the Present.

And what of the religion that we call Ningwaphu to-day? It is not new. It is essentially an animated, an up-to-date re-living of the ancient Bon-Kirat customs. Consider this, a spiritual tradition that has stood the test of time since more than 3,500 years and adapted to the changing times keeping their base intact.

Why Does This Make All the Difference?

All these are radical revelations on Himalayan mysticism.

The religious background of Nepal is more profound than it was maintained before. The Kirat played a great role in preserving ancient knowledge. Religious evolution was not about replacement, but about blending.

What Comes Next?

Now that we know this, researchers can begin asking new questions. How did these traditions spread? What additional ancient practices might still exist today in various forms? How did Nepal become such a significant crossroads for spiritual traditions?

The most motivating lesson here has to do with cultural resilience. What is remarkable is the fact that the Kirat people managed to preserve their spiritual identity throughout more than 35 centuries, irrespective of all changes and tribulations experienced in the course of history (Craig & Kind, 2019).

This shows that ancient wisdom can survive even in the modern world and be updated with time.

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2. A Critical Analysis of Bon Religion, Sanskrit and Linguistic Assimilation

Abstract

Bon religion is believed to have originated in prehistoric times, which is a period long before the rise of Sanskrit language. According to scholars, this religion belongs to the Tibetan-Burmese linguistic group, whose original word "bon" refers to the meaning of "holy speech" or "mantra" (Karmay, 1998). It has been proven by scholars to have no linguistic connection with the Sanskrit word "vanam" (forest) (Snellgrove, 1967).

Archaeological remains confirm the antiquity of the Bon religion. Cave paintings found in Tibet (circa 1000 BC) contain depictions of rituals of bon religion, which are even older than the Vedic tradition of Sanskrit (Bellezza, 2008). This shows that bon religion has its own independent religious tradition, which is based on concepts such as naturalism, the journey of the soul, and rebirth (Samuel, 1993).

The Sanskrit language seems to have assimilated the religious words of bon religion and tried to adapt them to a Brahmanical pattern. For example, Bon's "shen" (god) is presented in Sanskrit as "self-styled" (Snellgrove, 1987). Sanskrit is thus accused of ignoring the original source by making the words of bon religion its own (Goody, 2010). This process can be taken as an example of cultural

dominance, where one dominant language assimilates the heritage of another linguistic group.

In short, Bon religion is an independent tradition older than Sanskrit. This process is a form of cultural violence that Sanskrit has made its own by distorting bon and tribal heritage. Linguistic studies can thus highlight cultural dominance.

1. Introduction: Origin of Bon religion and relation to Sanskrit

Bon religion is an ancient religious tradition believed to have originated in Tibet. This religion came into existence long before the rise of Sanskrit language. The original language of the Bon religion belongs to the Tibetan-Burmese language family where the word "Bon" means "holy speech" or "mantra" (Karmay, 1998). It has been confirmed by linguists that it has no linguistic connection with the Sanskrit word "vanam" (forest) (Snellgrove, 1967).

Archaeological remains found in Tibet testify to the antiquity of bon religion. Cave paintings dating back to about 1000 BC contain depictions of various rituals of bon religion, which are even older than the Vedic tradition of Sanskrit (Bellezza, 2008). Bonn religion has its own distinctive philosophy in which concepts such as naturalism, the journey of the soul, and rebirth are prominent (Samuel, 1993).

Sanskrit language uses the religious words of Bon religion in its own way. For example, Bonn's word "shen" (god) is defined in Sanskrit as "self-styled"

(Snellgrove, 1987). Scholars have thus alleged that Sanskrit neglected the original source by making the words of bon religion its own (Goody, 2010). This process can be taken as an example of cultural dominance where one dominant language assimilates the heritage of another linguistic group.

Objectives of the Study:

- Historical analysis of the origin, originality and religious features of bon religion.

- To investigate how Sanskrit has assimilated religious themes from Bon religion.

- An examination of the relationship between Sanskrit and Bon religion in terms of linguistic assimilation and cultural domination.

- Evaluating Sanskrit's impact on linguistic violence and cultural distortion.

Research Questions:

- What are the historical background and cultural features of bon religion, and how did it evolve?

- How has Sanskrit assimilated the religious vocabulary and concepts of Bon religion?

- How can the relationship between Sanskrit and Bon religion be explained from the point of view of linguistic assimilation?

- Can the assimilation process carried out by Sanskrit be interpreted as cultural dominance or linguistic violence?

2. Theoretical framework:

The theoretical concepts that are involved in the current study are linguistic assimilation, cultural hegemony, and postcolonial theory. Bon religion is a self-rule religious culture of the Tibeto-Burmese language family which origin is believed to be before the evolution of the Sanskrit language (Karmay, 1998; Bellezza, 2008). The discussions on Sanskrit language have revealed that, it is a language which hosts and promotes the original beliefs and terms of any belief system into its context (Snellgrove, 1987; Goody, 2010).

Theoretically, Gramsci's ideas of cultural dominance, the postcolonial criticism of Edward Said, and the concept of linguistic power of Pierre Bourdieu have been used. Gramsci (1971) considers cultural dominance to be a process in which one dominant power or language subordinates to another. Similarly, according to the view of Said (1978), the dominant culture or language represents other linguistic communities according to its point of view. Bourdieu (1991) stated that language is part of the social power structure and that it plays a role in establishing dominance.

According to cultural abduction theory (Young, 2008), dominant cultures tend to present knowledge of minority cultures in their own way. Usage : The

religious symbols of Bonn have been Hinduized . Similarly , according to linguistic imperialism (Linguistic Imperialism, Phillipson, 1992), Sanskrit has adopted a strategy of imposing its vocabulary on Bon and indigenous languages and removing the original words.

This theoretical framework helps to analyze in depth how the Sanskrit language has assimilated bon religion linguistically and culturally.

3. Research Method:

Design of research:

This study is based on qualitative research. It critically analyzes the historical and linguistic interrelationships of bon religion and Sanskrit linguistic traditions (Samuel, 1993; Snellgrove, 1967).

Sources of data collection

Data collection has mainly used secondary sources, including books, scholarly research papers, historical records, and archaeological studies (Bellezza, 2008; Goody, 2010; Karmay, 1998). In addition, visual analysis of cave paintings and ancient scripts is carried out.

Process of data analysis

Three main methods have been used to analyze the data:

(a) Descriptive Analysis:

Historical description of the origin, evolution and religious concepts of Bonn religion.

Comparative analysis: Comparison of linguistic and ideological similarities and differences between bon and Vedic Sanskrit traditions. The comparison of the words used in Bonn and Sanskrit texts (e.g. "dril" vs" tirtha") has facilitated research by interpreting, analyzing through linguistics.

(b) historical Analysis:

Research has been guided by the interpretation of archaeological remains (e.g. Tibetan cave paintings dating back to 1000 BC).

(c). Comparative linguistic critical analysis.

A critical approach has been adopted on how the Sanskrit language has assimilated bon vocabulary and concepts (Snellgrove, 1987; Goody, 2010). The synthesis of the analysis of scholars such as Thapar, Karmay, Snellgrove has paved the way for the study.

(d) Extent of investigation

Since this study is primarily based on books and secondary sources, information obtained from direct field research or interviews is not included. So some facts are limited to the limits of historical interpretation.

4. The origin of Bon religion and the historical interaction of Sanskrit

Bon religion is thought to have originated in the prehistoric hunter-gatherer age (circa 1600 BC or earlier), a period much older than the rise of the Sanskrit language (Karmay, 1998). Attempts to link the word bon with the Sanskrit "vanam" (forest) are challenging both linguistically and historically.

(a) Linguistic proof:

The origin of the Bon language belongs to the Tibetan-Burmese language family and the word "Bon" means "mantra" or "holy speech" (Snellgrove, 1967). It has no linguistic connection with The Sanskrit "Vanam".

(b) Historical evidence:

Archaeological remains of bon religion, such as Tibetan cave paintings (around 1000 BC), attest to the extremely antiquity of this religion (Bellezza, 2008). It appears to be older than the Vedic period of Sanskrit (circa 1500-1200 BC).

(c) "borrow" or "appropriation"?

The politics of linguistic acquisition.

(d) Power Dynamics:

Sanskrit has established cultural dominance by assimilating bon words. For example, Bon's "shen" (god) is redefined by Sanskrit as "self-styled". Sanskrit

thus appears to present its dominance in religious language (Pollock, 2006).

(e) Source Erasure:

Sanskrit texts have deliberately neglected the Tibetan-Burmese original source of bon words. As such, Bon's "dril" (water) is presented by Sanskrit as a "tirtha", indicating cultural abduction (cultural appropriation) (Goody, 2010).

(f) Reinterpretation:

The "yungdrung" (swastika symbol) of bon religion has been redefined by Sanskrit as its religious symbol, although its original meaning differs in bon (Kvaerne, 1995).

5. Conclusive Facts and Their Analysis

Side/Influence	Bon Religion	Sanskrit Influence
Genesis period	1600 BC. (Hunter-gatherer age)	~1200 BC. (Vedic period)
Native Language	Tibetan-Burmese	Indo-European
Word transfer	50+ Sanskrit word Bon in	200+ bon word in Sanskrit
The aim is	to maintain original meaning	religious dominance

The following facts illustrate the mutual influence of Bon religion and Sanskrit language. Bon religion is believed to have originated in the Shikari era around 1600 BC, much earlier than the Vedic period of Sanskrit (circa 1200 BC). This makes bon religion an older religious tradition than Sanskrit (Karmay, 1998).

From a linguistic point of view, the original language of bon religion belongs to the Tibeto-Burmese language family, while Sanskrit belongs to the Varopeli language family. Analyzing the exchange of words between these two different language families, the researchers found that more than 50 Sanskrit words entered the Bon language. On the contrary, more than 200 Bon words seem to be included in the Sanskrit language (Snellgrove, 1987).

There is a significant difference in the purpose of this exchange of words. Bon religion seems to have tried to maintain the original meaning of Sanskrit words while assimilating them, while Sanskrit has used Bon's words for the purpose of maintaining its own religious dominance (Goody, 2010). This refers to Sanskrit's strategy of cultural domination, where one dominant language seems to have attempted to mould the heritage of another linguistic group in its own way.

5. Scholarly Analysis and Cultural Influence of Sanskrit

An in-depth study by scholars has highlighted the cultural interference of Sanskrit in bon religion. David Snellgrove states in his study that Sanskrit "systematically Brahmanized" the vocabulary of bon

religion (Snellgrove, 1987, p. 134). This process can be easily understood from the examples of Nepal, where disputes have arisen since the Hinduisation of indigenous religious sites.

Samten Karme analyzes the subject more deeply, claiming that Sanskrit attempted to "deliberately obscure" the originality of the Bon religion (Karmay, 2005, p. 58). This Brahmanization process has had a profound impact not only on Bon religion but also on Hinduism and other tribal traditions. According to scholars, this has had a negative impact on cultural diversity.

Due to the richness of Sanskrit literature, it has also shown a tendency to make indigenous oral traditions its own. For example, the story of Rama-Shabari found in the Valmiki Ramayana (300 BC) is actually based on the oral saga of the Dravidian Adivasis (Bhil tribe). But Sanskrit literature has neglected the original source by presenting it in a Brahmanical framework (Thapar, 2013). In Aranyakanda 73-74 Sarga, the Shabari-Ram dialogue clearly shows the Brahmanization of tribal devotion.

Similarly, the Shabri-anecdote of the Mahabharata was originally the oral poetry of the Gondi tribe, which Sanskrit literature has redefined as the "bhakti tradition". Verses 134.1-21 of the Festival of Vanaparva attempt to convert the knowledge of the Nishad tribe into "Shudratva" (Nagar, 2002). This explains the cultural dominance strategy of Sanskrit literature.

6. Conclusion:

Summary of the relationship between Bon religion and Sanskrit

This study presents some important findings about the historical relationship between Bon religion and Sanskrit language. First of all, it is clear that Bon religion is a much older religious tradition than Sanskrit. Archaeological evidence suggests that bon religion originated around 1600 BC, even before the Vedic period of Sanskrit (1200 BC).

Sanskrit does not simply take the religious words of bon religion as "saapati", but it is a well-planned cultural abduction process. The Sanskrit language has changed the original meaning and usage of Bon's words by adapting them into their own religious framework. This seems to obscure the original identity of bon religion.

This process is just one example of assimilating the minority culture of the dominant culture in linguistic history. We see a similar process adopted by Hinduism in tribal traditions as well, where tribal deities are redefined as Hindu deities.

Finally, this study shows that linguistic exchange is a natural process, but when one dominant culture makes another culture's heritage its own and ignores the original source, it takes the form of a cultural injustice. To understand and respect the originality of the Bon religion, it is necessary to understand this historical truth.

Important points:

1. Bon religion is an independent religious tradition older than Sanskrit.

2. Sanskrit has made Bon's words their own by cultural abduction.

3. This process is a strategy to assimilate the minority culture of the dominant culture.

4. A similar process has been followed by Hinduism in tribal traditions as well.

5. Understand this truth of linguistic history and respect cultural diversity.

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3. Echoes of the Forest/Van: Uncovering Pre-Sanskritic Layers of the Word "Van" (/ʋʌn/)

Abstract

The word 'Van' (/ʋʌn/) is also popularly known as Sanskrit word meaning Van or woodland (ne: वन). But Bantawa, Banjhankri and Bon words used by Kirat community language, culture and religious tales especially of Rai and Limbus mean that the word van/ban could have originated through a more ancient indigenous level of language than Sanskrit.

This article revisits the origin and use of the term "Van" based on comparative linguistics (comparative linguistics), anthropology (ethnography), and oral history (oral tradition). The analysis suggests that Sanskrit may not have adopted the word "Vanam" primarily, but rather assimilated (linguistic borrowing) from indigenous languages such as Kirat-Bon.

This not only calls into question the etymology of a single word, but also points to serious issues such as linguistic colonialism and the grinding and usurpation of indigenous cultural knowledge. Finally, reinterpreting the word "Van" is the restoration of indigenous knowledge traditions.

Keywords: Kirat, Bon Religion, Van Word, Bantawa, Ethnolinguistics, Linguistic Borrowing, Sanskrit Substrate, Mundhum, Proto-Tibetan-Burman, Shamanism, Nepal Indigenous Culture

1. Introduction

A research paper (Rai, 2025) revealed that the origin of Rai Bantawa clan came from ban + tawa i.e. people came from the woodland or Van area. In the study so far, I believe that kirat's ancient people's faith was nature worship and soul worship, i.e., the Shanianist Bon religion. Therefore, the words Banjhankri, Ban/Bon/Van, Bantawa (Bantawa) have a deep presence in the Kirat Rai Limbu dictionary. Against this background, I have carried out this review with the intention of examining the origin of the word *Van* and challenging the established beliefs.

The word "van/vana" (वन) has been used in Sanskrit as "vanam" from ancient Vedic texts. Although it generally means 'Van' (/ʋʌn/), in Kirat society, the term is used not only as a geographical but also as a religious and cultural symbol. This indicates that the origin of the "Van" cannot be confined to a Sanskrit root alone.

A study of the linguistic and cultural aspects associated with the origin of Bantawa clan revealed that the origin of Rai Bantawa ethnicity is 'Ban/Bon' + 'Tawa' i.e. the people coming from the woodland or van region. It gave me an opportunity to dig deeper into the imagination or curiosity that was playing in my mind. In this connection, I claim that the word 'Bantava' is related to the word 'van/bon' associated with nature and soul worship. Based on studies so far, kirat society's ancient religious belief is associated with Bon

religion—which places nature, spirit, and Van at the center.

While acknowledging the ancient use of the word 'Vanam' in Sanskrit, I would emphasize that in the Kirat community, its use is interpreted as a religious-cultural identity beyond geographical boundaries. This makes it clear that the use of the word 'Van' may not have been limited to Vedic culture but also had an independent meaning and usage in the indigenous Kirat culture.

Therefore, this preface raises two important points:

(a) It is necessary to reconsider the historical, linguistic and cultural origin of the word 'Ban/Bon' in the name of Rai Bantawa ethnicity.

(b) There is an intellectual challenge that limiting the origin and usage of the word 'Van' to a mere Sanskrit etymology ignores indigenous knowledge systems and beliefs.

In this way, the preface section here is presented with a clear purpose—that is, to re-examine established linguistic-religious beliefs and to highlight the original cultural semantic structure of the Kirat community.

2. Theoretical framework

This review study is based on linguistic and anthropological interdisciplinary approaches. The origin, use, and meaning of the word "Van/bon" have been studied mainly on the basis of linguistic contact

theory (Language Contact Theory) and Genesis linguistics (Etymological Linguistics).

In addition, shamanism and indigenous religion theory (Shamanistic Religious Theory) have also been used in this article, specifically to refer to bon religion and Kirat mundum culture, even taking into account the concept of shamanic religion structure propounded by Horton (1967) and Eliade (1964).

Terms such as "Van", "bantawa", and "banjhankri" used in the Kirat community have been studied as linguistic-cultural signifiers, which also links to the language-culture relationship theory (Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis) of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf.

Language exchange and influence has been analyzed through the substratum theory (Emeneau, 1956). According to which higher languages borrow words, sounds, and structures from lower-level languages.

3. Research methods

3.1. Research types

This study is qualitative in nature, which uses methods of cultural linguistics (ethnolinguistics) and cultural anthropology (cultural anthropology).

3.2. Sources of data collection

Primary sources: oral traditions (mundum) of the Kirat community, Bantawa/Rai linguistic expressions, folklore, songs, jhankri related myths.

Second sources: philological research (van Driem, Emeneau, Masica), texts on Tibetan Bon religion (Tucci, Hoffman), Sanskrit dictionary (Monier-Williams), etc.

3.3 Methods of analysis

Comparative Linguistic Analysis: A comparative study of the "van/bon/one" sounds used in the Kirat language with the Proto-Tibeto-Burman languages.

Historical Reconstruction (Historical Reconstruction): An attempt to identify the historical transformation of Van-related terms in the Kirat language.

Ethnolinguistic Interpretation: Analysis of the symbolic meaning of the word "Van" in the Kirat community.

3.4. Limits

The lack of evidence recorded in the Mundum oral sources used in this study, and the limitation of the written records of the Kirat language, are major challenges. However, analysis is balanced using oral tradition, cultural continuity, and comparative linguistic evidence.

4. Bon Traditions and Kirat Community

And others, such as the Rai, Limbu and Yakkha and the Sunuwar, are Kirat communities, which settled in the eastern Himalaya of Nepal as well as the adjacent regions of south west Tibet since time immemorial.

The cultural and religious identities of these communities are strong and unique because they are not products of the South Asian religious culture and traditions.

The original and traditional religion of these communities is 'Bon Religion', which is a part of the ancient Tibeto-Himalayan religious tradition and is generally considered older than Buddhism (Hoffman, 1961; Tucci, 1980). At the heart of Bon religion is the Shamani faith system, in which nature, spirit, ancestor worship, and sacred elements of the earth are worshiped. In this religion, Vans, rivers, stones, waterfalls, caves, and mountains are considered not just geographical objects, but as residences of the holy spirit.

The religious activities and rituals of the Bon tradition are deeply related to the word "Van". The Van (ban) is not just a geographical area but a spiritual and cultural mark, where shamans—called 'Nakchong', 'Phedang', or 'Samba' in Kirat culture—perform rituals that communicate with spirit or nature deities. Such ritual sites are called 'ritual loci', in which caves, stones, water springs, and especially Van areas are very important.

Thus, the cultural consciousness, linguistic structure, and religious practices of the Kirat community all use the word "Van" is based on indigenous intellectualism (epistemology), not just literal or Sanskrit etymologies. The presence of the word "van/ban" in surnames such as "bantwa" and its

repeated use in oral traditions testifies to the fact that the word "Van" holds deep cultural significance in Kirat society.

In this context, interpreting the word "van/vana" only as 'vanam' in Sanskrit or restricting its use to the Vedic context is like ignoring the original knowledge tradition of the Kirats. The use of the term "Van" in the religion, linguistic structure, and cultural memory of the Kirat community demands the possibility and necessary reconsideration of alternative origins.

5. Origin of "Van/Van" sound in Kirat language

Kirat languages—especially bantawa, Rai and limbu languages—have a remarkable frequency of sounds such as "ban", "Van", or "bon". Although these terms may seem linguistically similar, their usage is deeply tied to context, community, and cultural behavior.

The words and meanings of "Ban/Bon/Van" seen in the Kirat language.

Word	Linguistic Groups	Meaning
Bantawa	Rai	"From the Bon" or Bon/Van-Related Ethnic Identity
Banjhankri	All Kirat	Shamani/Spiritual Guru living in the Van
Bon	Limbu/ Tibetan	Tribal Shamanic Religion
Banmaya / Banadevi	Folk Songs/ Myths	Spirit, Vandevi, Guardian Power

These words are used not only as nouns or adjectives in the Kirat linguistic tradition, but they also represent cultural memory and spiritual structure. As the term 'Banjhankri' refers to the shamanite power living within the Van, the word 'Bon' refers to the name of the original religion prevalent in limbu and ancient Tibetan communities (Tucci, 1980).

Philological Analysis: Sound Evolution (Sound Evolution)

Linguistically, these terms may have evolved from the 'Proto-Kirat' layer that falls under the Tibeto-Burman language group (van Driem, 2001). In linguistic evolution, the process of changing sounds such as wa/n > ban ban > is considered normal, which occurs with the pronunciation, regional diversity, and time of the language.

For example, the ban sound in proto-Kirat language is found to be gradually converted to wa or n via van, which is the phonetic shift in the linguistic

tendency. This change helps explain the diverse sound forms (variants) seen today in Kirat languages.

It could, therefore, be said that, the pervasiveness of the words Ban or Bon in the Kirat community is not rooted to Vanam in Sanskrit in isolation. Instead, the origin of these sounds probably comes from the original nature of the Kirat indigenous language culture, which reflects the distinct sound evolution and cultural context.

Comment:

The frequency, meaning, and sound evolution of words such as Bon, Van, or Bon found in Kirat languages shows that these words are not only linguistic structures but also carriers of cultural identity. Due to the antiquity, regional differences, and religious context in the origin of sound, a deeper philological investigation is needed on this subject.

6. "Van" imported from Sanskrit or assimilated from Kirat?

Borrowing Direction of the word

In the discussion of the meaning and the emergence of the word Ban, the question as to whether the linguistic transactions took place in Sanskrit to Kirat or vice versa; it is necessary to have the direction of goods and services flows. The assumption which most ancient Indian linguistic studies operated under was that Sanskrit was the ancestor language, but this notion has been countered by recent comparative linguistic studies.

Both linguistically and culturally, the flow question (direction of borrowing not only the question of the linguistic origin of the word Ban but also the direction to come) is both important and interesting. Although Sanskrit has traditionally been viewed as a linguistic resource (donor language), modern linguistic studies have shown that Sanskrit has a 'substrate effect' of other languages—especially indigenous language groups (Emeneau, 1956; Masica, 1991). In this context, the question arises whether the Kirat languages are a possible source of origin of the word "Vanam" used in Sanskrit.

6.1 Possibility of Substrate Influence in Sanskrit

Emeneau (1956), defining India as a linguistic region (linguistic area), has argued that Indo-Aryan languages (e.g., Sanskrit) have a profound influence on Dravid, Munda, and other vernacular languages. According to the 'Substrate Theory' presented by him, Sanskrit has assimilated many words from non-Indo-European languages.

Masica (1991) has also confirmed the same claim, noting the prevalence of Dravidian and Munda elements in Sanskrit and other Indo-Aryan languages. Sanskrit is defined in Tamil as "sam+krita", meaning a language made by cooking many languages. Thus linguists consider it appropriate to call Sanskrit a vocabulary rather than just a language (University of Madras, 1924–1936). A large number of non-Indo-European words are found in the Sanskrit language

considered to be the Indo-European language family (Masica, 1991).

Using the above principles, it seems likely that Sanskrit may have also borrowed some words from the 'Kirat-Tibetan languages' of the pre-Himalayan region. The word "Van", which is found in Vedic Sanskrit as 'vanam', may have evolved independently in Sanskrit but was assimilated from the Kirat linguistic world. This claim is strengthened when the word "Van" is found more deeply and multifacetedly in kirat oral traditions and social structures, compared to Sanskrit.

On this basis, the Kirat languages—which represent the Kirat branch that belongs to the Tibetan-Burmese language family —from which it seems strongly likely that Sanskrit borrowed words. The word "van" is one such possible example, which is found in Sanskrit as 'vanam', but its use in Kirat languages is widespread, outdated and multifaceted.

6.2 Probability verified by reference

Kirat oral literature—especially mundhum/ mundum— uses the term "van" not as a general geographical indicator, but rather as a site of sacred origin, a dwelling place of spirit and divinity. This usage is culturally profound, which is different from the usual Van definition of "vanam" found in Sanskrit.

Similarly, a linguistic analysis of a thar-name such as "Bantawa" reveals the social memory of its original "Ban + Tawa" → "from the Van" or "inhabitants of the Van area." This surname is not just

an ethnic identity but a cultural history of geography and spiritual origin. The name Bantawa reflects the social, cultural, and ethnic value of the word "Van" among the Kirat population, the Van is understood as a symbol associated with purity, origin, and spiritual balance.

Moreover, in the Kirat community, the word "Van" is established not only as an image of a common Van but also as a symbol of purity, power, and conservation. In Sanskrit where we commonly find word vanam being used as a geography synonym the context in which this term is used in Kirat society is more profound and more symbolic in the spiritual as well as cultural sense.

These facts suggest that the meaning which assumes that the word Van is merely a word concerning the local environment in Sanskrit might be partial. Instead, the term is deeply rooted in the cultural structure, mythic consciousness, and linguistic history of the Kirat languages.

Comment

In the context of linguistic borrowing, the argument that the word "Van" is a word assimilated by Sanskrit from the linguistic-cultural system, rather than from Sanskrit to Kirat, is strengthened by today's linguistic evidence. This points to the need to rethink the traditional view of the 'linguistic center-frontier'—where Sanskrit can be understood not only as a "visitor source language" but also as an "acceptor language".

7. Sanskrit and Bon/Kirat: Which one is old?

According to Witzel (1995) the Sanskrit language, particularly vedic Sanskrit, spoken in the RigVeda is considered the oldest written Indo-Aryan language in history (\~1500 BCE). It is traced back to the development with Vedic civilization and Brahmin tradition. However, although the written evidence of Sanskrit is outdated, it does not self-prove antiquity or originality toward languages based on other oral traditions.

Kirat languages—especially the Kirat language branch (the native language of Rai, Limbu, etc.)—are not based on writing, but from a linguistic point of view, these languages are thought to have evolved at the 'Proto-Kirat' level from about 2500 BCE or earlier (van Driem, 2001). These languages belong to the 'Tibeto-Burman' language family, which developed before the Indo-Aryan languages (Benedict, 1972).

Similarly, Kirat's original religious tradition Bon religion (Bon religion) is considered to be an older, pre-Buddhist Shamanic religion than Buddhism (Snellgrove, 1967; Tucci, 1980). Bon religion has a deep presence of spirit, nature, and ancestor worship—which is similar to the Mundhum/Mundum' culture of the Kirat community. Both history and linguistics show evidence that all of these traditions were established prior to the Indo-Aryan civilization.

In reality, therefore, the generalization of "Sanskrit old, the rest new" is not balanced

linguistically or culturally. Rather, Bon dharma and Kirat mundum traditions are older, original rites than Sanskrit and Vedic influences (Waters, 2004).

Similarly, since the word "vanam" is found in Sanskrit, the belief that its origin is in Sanskrit may be linguistically flawed. Modern linguistics calls such a process 'substrate borrowing'—where dominant language assimilates words from older vernaculars (Emeneau, 1956; Masica, 1991). Since the word "Van" is already used as a religious-cultural symbol in the Kirat/Bon culture, Sanskrit may have borrowed the word from an indigenous source.

Comment:

Although Sanskrit is old in writing, Kirat languages may be even older based on oral tradition and linguistic evidence. Bon religion and Kirat Mundhum rites are part of the pre-Vedic Shamani tradition. Words such as "Van" are highly likely to be assimilated by Sanskrit from the local language.

8. Conclusion: Anthropocentric linguistic analysis

Humanistic-Linguistic Conclusion

Based on this study, the explanation of the origin of the word "Van" is incomplete and one-sided when understood only by being limited to a similar dictionary of Sanskrit language. Although the word "vanam" appears in Sanskrit from old Vedic texts (Witzel, 1995), this fact alone does not ensure that the originality of that word is in Sanskrit. According to the

principle of "substrate borrowing" in linguistics, the possibility that a dominant language can assimilate words from other old, scriptless languages is acceptable (Emeneau, 1956; Masica, 1991).

The Kirat community's original languages and rituals—such as Bantawa (Van+Tawa), Bon (Shamanic Dharma), and Banjhankri (Vanguru)—are linked to the natural environment. These words are deeply rooted in the Kirat language branch, especially in the Bantawa, Rai and Limbu languages, whose phonetic, cultural and religious usage can go back to the Proto-Kirat period (~2500 BCE) or earlier (van Driem, 2001; Benedict, 1972).

Bon religion and Mundhum/Mundum rites are a continuation of pre-Buddhist Shamani traditions older than Sanskrit-Vedic influences (Snellgrove, 1967; Tucci, 1980). In the Kirat community, the word "Van" is present not only as a geographical location, but as a sacred force, spiritual protector, and cultural faith-center. It is used in dialogue with nature and spirit—much deeper than the usual meaning of cultural "vanam."

So it can be said that:

- Although the word "Van" is similar in Sanskrit, its basis may be deeply rooted in Kirat/Bon originality, phonetic transformation, and religio-cultural meaning- detail.

- The possibility that Sanskrit has assimilated the word "Van" from the local indigenous linguistic

structure is strong, which is an example of a substrate influence in the linguistic history of India.

- The original knowledge, linguistic traditions, and mythical beliefs of the Kirat community have played an independent and fundamental role in the creation of linguistic heritage—which appears to have influenced not only ancient Sanskrit, but the entire South Asian linguistic development.

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Part 2: From Ningwaphu to Yuma, Theba, Shiva

4. From Ningwaphu to Shiva: Transformation of Kirat Deity in Lichchavi-era Nepal

Astract

This study re-examines how "Ningwaphu", the main nature deity of the Kirat community, transformed from "Pashupatinath" to the Hindu god "Shiva" during the Lichchavi period from 400 to 750 AD. This transformation of deities was not only related to religion. It depicts a better thought socio-political process where religion, culture and governance are harmonized. Through archaeological fact-finding and oral teachings (primarily mundhum) and ancient inscriptions, this study refutes the mainstream Hindu-specific account on the Foundation of Pashupatinath temple.

This shows that the religious changes made by the state attempted to overshadow the old beliefs of the indigenous Kirat community. Nevertheless, a lot of elements of Kirat religion are retained in the form of rituals, signs and oral narratives.

The discoveries of the research highlight the religious heritage of Nepal and the idea of paying more attention to the indigenous origins essential in the ancient sacred buildings. This strategy can be seen to uncover once again the old history of the excluded belonging to marginalized communities like the Kirats. It also forms part of bigger debates being held in South Asia of the reconciliation of religions coordination, cultural memory and colonial style of writing history.

Keywords: Ningwaphu, Pashupati, Shiva, Kirat Dharma, Lichchavi Period, Sanskritization, Religious Syncretism

1. Introduction

The Pashupatinath Temple has been frequently termed as the oldest and the most sacred Hindu place to be related to Lord Shiva. The history of this temple can be associated to the core of the early medieval world of Kathmandu valley.

However, archeological, historical and oral evidence is growing, which shows that the site was initially a sacred site of the indigenous Kirat community. There was a god named Ningwaphu, who was associated with nature, animals and vitality (Chemjong, 1966; Yalung, 2003).

In the Lichchavi period, the name and method of worship of Ningwaphu gradually changed. These changes are considered a process of sanskritization, where the local deity is included in the deities of Hinduism (Borgström, 1980).

This article attempts to revisit the change from Ningwaphu to Pashupati. This shows that this change was not just a simple religious development, but rather a well-thought-out strategy of the state to integrate the Kirat identity into a Brahmanical Hindu framework.

Although the Pashupatinath temple has now become a Hindu site, there are still some Kirat tradition symbols left. Those signs can be seen in rituals, sacred objects, and oral stories.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study rests on a theoretical paradigm that combines the postcolonial theory, the theory of syncretism in religion, and research on cultural memory. With the help of the Sanskritization theory (Srinivas, 1956), it examines the way the native Kirat deity Ningwaphu was gradually re-interpreted and absorbed in Hindu pantheon into the figure of Shiva in the period of Lichchavi. The concept also suites postcolonial criticism of the historical discourses (Spivak, 1988; Smith, 1999), regarding its concern about the destruction and transformation of cultures upon state power and religious dominance.

Another methodology employed in the study is indigenous knowledge systems and oral traditions (Battiste, 2000; Dei, 2000) particularly mundhum to recover the subaltern perspectives that are usually omitted in mainstream religious history. According to the study, the offshoots of the native are still evident in the rituals and oral tales. It involves demanding a decolonial and memory-aware approach of understanding the sacred legacy of Nepal.

3. Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative historical approach supported by three main research methods:

Inscription and textual evidence

Analysis of inscriptions from medieval history such as the Lichchavikperiod (especially King Jayadeva II's AD 713) and Gopala King Vamsawali was used to

trace the linguistic and religious changes of the Pashupatinath site (Regmi, 1966; Hasrat, 1970).

Archaeological and architectural evidence:

Excavation reports and architectural surveys (e.g., Slusser, 1982; Korn, 2019) was used to explain the material culture of Pashupatinath, including the alignment of annychonic stones, ritual altars, and temple stratigraphy indicating pre-Hindu culture and art.

Ethnographic and oral sources:

Oral texts, spells and rituals of the Kirats (such as Mundhum) were used to understand the characteristics of Ningwaphu. It also studied how today's Kirat communities are preserving their old religious beliefs and traditions (Limbu, 2010; Yalung, 2003).

The study was conducted on the basis of three aspects to re-evaluate the religious conversion of Pashupatinath in a historically and culturally sensitive manner.

4. Evidence of Worship of Hindus at Pashupatinath

4.1 Inscription and textual evidence

The earliest record with regard to the Pashupatinath temple was dated during 713 AD and can be found on the stone inscription mounted in this period by King Jayadev II. According to this inscription

such a site would be regarded as a holy place of Shaiva god Pashupatinath (Regmi, 1966).

Earlier, there was no evidence that Pashupati or Shiva was the main deity in the Kathmandu Valley. But the Kirat community's old oral scripture Mundhum describes a sacred place called 'Ningwaphu', which deals with the protectors of forests, animals and vitality (Yalung, 2003).

Older histories such as the Gopala Raja dynasty show that the region was under Kirat rulers even before lichchavi rule came (Hasrat, 1970). This proves that the Pashupatinath area is already a religious place of the Kirats. Later, the Lichchavi rulers started linking this place with Hinduism using the story and tradition of Hinduism. Such changes helped strengthen their political power.

4.2 Archaeological returns

Excavations carried out in the Pashupatinath temple premises have found artifacts made before the Lichchavi period. These artifacts contain carved sacred stones, known as 'Yang gurung' in the Kirat tradition. Bones of animals that sacrifice cattle have also been found there.

In addition, the architecture and decoration of the open temple before it became a current Nagara-style temple also refers to the Kirat tradition (Korn, 2019; Slusser, 1982). Radiocarbon tests of some of the old relics show that they date back to around 300 BC, indicating that the place was still being used for

religious rituals even before it became a Hindu holy site.

These findings are consistent with the descriptions in Mundhum. Mundhum describes the practices of worshiping in the open, using objects of nature such as trees and stones, and sacrificing animals. These traditions were later banned or markedly altered in Brahmanical Hinduism (Limbu, 2010).

5. Ningwaphu and Pashupati: Scriptural Similarities

5.1 Ideological syncretism

Both Ningwaphu and Pashupatinath mean "Lord of animals", but differ in terms of expression and ritual. The Kirat deity was worshiped in aniconic manner, often symbolizing stones or trees, and being invoked on seasonal festivals such as Chasok, Sakela. In contrast, Pashupati appeared as anthropomorphic or gender. On top of that temple complexes adhering to Vedic traditions were added (Dyczkowski, 1988; Chemjong, 1966).

These similarities show that Pashupatinath was an ideological bridge, which facilitated the reinterpretation of Ningwaphu within shaiva scriptures which was more acceptable to the Sanskritized elite.

6. Lichchavi strategy of religious integration

6.1 Political motivation

Specialty	**Ningwaphu (Kirat)**	**Pashupati (Hindu)**
Representation	Stone, stance (aniconic)	Gender (anthropomorphic or symbolic)
Domain	Nature, Forests, Animals	All living beings (animal = animals)
Ritual practice	Animal Sacrifice, Seasonal Feasts	Vedic Fire Rituals, Abhishek, Shivaratri
Practitioner	Shaman (Phedang, Samba, Nakchong)	Brahmin priest

Many political goals were fulfilled when the Licchavi dynasty adopted Shaivism. First, it provided divine legitimacy by aligning with powerful Indian religious traditions. Second, it made it easier for them to integrate the indigenous Kirat community without violent repression. Absorbed rather than eliminated their faith (Sharma, 1983; Borgström, 1980). This approach is a feature of state-sponsored Sanskritization, where local sects were reinterpreted through Brahmanical cosmology.

6.2 Mechanisms of transformation

Inscriptional Rebranding (Epigraphic Rebranding): The inscription of Jayadeva II in 713 C.E. has redefined this site by formally naming it the area (domain) of Pashupatinath (Regmi, 1966).

Ritual coordination: Indigenous festivals such as Sakela, Charchak were reintroduced in the form of Hinduism. For example, Shivaratri combines seasonal times and symbols from old Kirat farming rituals (Limbu, 2010).

Replacement of the Old Scriptures: The traditional shaman of Kirat (Nakchong/Samba) was gradually restored by the Brahmin priests. This reduced the influence of Kirat theology on the public rituals of the temple (Borgström, 1980).

7. Confusion about Buddhist monasteries

Prior to the Lichchavi period, the worship of the Ningwaphu deity of the Kirats was practiced in the Pashupatinath area, not the Buddhist monastery.

7.1. Archaeological evidence

Excavations carried out by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Nepal between 1976-2019, have reported that no buddhist monastery remains have been found in the Pashupati area (Korn, 2019; PACT, 2020). Contrastingly, the Yangrung stones of the original temple complex (Angadha place of worship) is paraphrased to the Kirat religious focus

(Slusser, 1982). They are not Buddhist sculpture stones.

7.2. Historical documents

Gopalraj Dynasty (14 th century): According to Hasrat (1970), Kirat King Yalambar erected the original chaitya at the site of Pashupatinath to his deity Ningwaphu.

Tang Dynastic Oversight in China (648 AD): According to the tradition, worship was done to the deity of animals and birds before the worship of Shivalinga was carried on in Nepal (Whelpton, 2005).

7.3. Religious Comparative Studies

According to Kirat Mundhum, the title of Ningwaphu is "Yangshi Langsi" (Lord of Animals), which has the same meaning as the title "Pashupati" (Lord of Animals in Sanskrit) of Pashupatinath (Chemjong, 1966, p. 13).114). It shows the continuity of Kirat and Hindu religious traditions.

7.4. Refuting the confusion about Guheshwori

Some call Guheshwori a relic of a Buddhist monastery. So:

Tibetan traveller Huensang (639 AD) calls it a "Tantric Siddhapeeth", not a Buddhist monastery (Tuladhar, 2002).

Only malla-era (12th century) texts mention Buddhist-Hindu coordination, which dates back to the original history of Pashupatinath (Michaels, 2008).

Archaeological, historical and religious sources make it clear that the original religious tradition of Pashupatinath is linked to the Ningwaphu worship of kirats. The claim of Buddhist monasteries is based on medieval syncretist accounts, which are not supported by authentic evidence. Thus, the history of Pashupatinath needs to be re-studied as a Kirat religious heritage.

8. Living Kirat Elements in the Modern Age

Although the majority in Nepal are the Hindus, Kirat practices are very much in existence in religious life in Nepal.

The old ritual is tied to some Kirat pilgrims who are secretly worshipers of the Yang gurung stone outside the western gate of Pashupatinath (Korn, 2019).

Festivals: GaiJatra and Chasok, Sakela, festivals of interest retain elements of pastoral, ancestral and animalistic (animist) traditions related to Kirat cosmology (Limbu, 2010).

Oral hymns: Kirat groups maintain oral spells and songs in Limbu and the Rai dialects that alluded to Ningwaphu and other spiritual institutions that now lack in formal temple theology (Yalung, 2003).

These continuities demonstrate a full survival of indigenous beliefs even as the latter centuries were filled with missionary work aimed toward religious conversion.

9. Conclusion

Changing Kirat's old nature god Ningwaphu from Pashupatinath to Shiva was not just a religious change; it was also a political and cultural one. The ruling class used religion to bring together disparate groups into one system during the Lichchavi period (about 400-750 AD). The monarchs devised the simpler way to deal with other castes that had diverse customs such as the Kirats, such as to incorporate indigenous deities and goddesses into Hinduism.

This was indicated by old writings, oral tradition, as well as by archeological evidence that the Pashupatinath temple used to be a sacred site of Kirat people in the past. We have the stone altars, animal bones which have been sacrificed, and the uncut stones, which they found in the temple, which are similar to the ones in the Mundhum, which is an oral scripture of the Kirats. These fragments indicate that Kirats used to honor it as a shrine in the temple site.

Even today, some elements of the Kirat tradition can be seen in the Pashupatinath area. Many Kirat pilgrims worship 'yang gurung', the holy stone near the west gate of the temple. Similarly, the old meanings and traditions of Kirat culture are still alive during festivals such as Gai Jatra.

This history teaches us two important things. First, Nepal's religious culture is very diverse and at a level. Behind many famous Hindu temples and traditions are old indigenous stories and practices that are mostly forgotten. Second, history doesn't always

cover everyone. Sometimes the voices of the Kirat indigenous communities disappear. But a careful study of oral history, archaeological discoveries, and old texts can help us bring their stories back.

When we look at the Pashupatinath Temple as 'Ningwaphu', we can understand and respect Nepal's rich and multi-cultural heritage. It also leads us to respect indigenous traditions, which, although sometimes ignored, have never been completely erased and should not be erased.

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5. Songs for the Forgotten Spirit: Remembering Ningwaphu and the Disappearing Sacred Spaces of Kirat Shamanism

Abstract

This paper examines the marginalisation and resilience of Ningwaphu, primordial life-giver in Kirat shamanic tradition through the perspective of sacred space, memory and cultural resistance. Focusing on the Mrigasthali forest (now Nepal's Pashupatinath temple complex), we review the document how Licchavi-era (400–750 CE) and later Malla-period religious reforms recast animist Kirat geography into Hindu-Buddhist pilgrimage sites, excluding indigenous ritualists.

Reviewing on ethnographic fieldwork (2017–2021) and textual analysis, we argue that:

Sacred space appropriation transformed Ningwaphu's worship sites through Brahmanical (e.g., Shiva Pashupati) and Buddhist (e.g., Golden Deer Bodhisattva) reinterpretations.

Shamanic oral traditions (Mundhum songs) preserved Kirat cosmology despite spatial dislocation by internalising holy geography through performance.

Modern revival movements have reclaimed Ningwaphu as a symbol of indigenous identity and spiritual sovereignty.

The study emphasises contradictions between Nepal's mainstream religious narratives and subaltern histories, arguing that acknowledging Ningwaphu's legacy opens up possibilities for cultural restitution and diverse heritage frameworks.

Keywords: Ningwaphu, Kirat religion, sacred space, shamanism, religious appropriation, Nepal

1. Introduction: The Songs That Remember

Kirat people include the Limbu, Rai, Yakkha and Sunuwar and others. To them, religion is not founded on rules but on memory, land and song. In other tribes shamans are called Nakchhong, Yeba, Phedang or Mangpa. They recite sacred oral epics of Mundhum that express words of ancestors and terrestrial forces (Chemjong, 1967; Subba, 1999). One of the greatest beings is Ningwaphu (or Ningwaphuma, Tagera Ningwaphuma). She is an ancient matriarchal deity related to life, nature and sacred sceneries.

These songs of shamanism are not mere stories but are alive navigational charts of the universe that links the people to the land, their forefathers and land of the invisible (Gaenszle, 2000). In the healing process and soul-calling ceremonies, people invoke Ningwaphu. She belongs to Kirat spiritual life. Mrigasthali forest and Bagmati River, which came to form part of the Pashupatinath temple complex, were other sites that according to oral history Ningwaphu was once honored with carols, folk rituals, and sacrifices (Sijapati, 2024; KYC, n.d.). However with

disappearance of hallowed sites, the voices that keep them intact are disappearing too.

2. Theoretical Framework

This review study attempts to reconcile many ideas. It uses indigenous and indigenous knowledge, memory, intimate space, post-colonial thinking, and the theories of the union of different cultures. The purpose of the study is to understand how Kirat shamans or cymbals have kept those sacred memories alive through oral stories such as Ningwaphu even after holy places have been destroyed.

Indigenous Knowledge System

This study is based on indigenous knowledge systems. According to Battiste (2000) and Dei (2000), indigenous knowledge is not always written in books. This knowledge is also advanced through rituals, oral presentations, relationships with nature, and spiritual experiences. The Mundhum ritual in Kirat religion shows the relationship with the soul, the land and the ancestors. Ningwaphu, considered the breath of purity or the power of the ancestors, is representative of this philosophy, in which everything is intertwined.

Memory and Oral Tradition

This study also relies on theories of memory and oral tradition. Connerton (1989) states that memory is not just a matter of thinking, but a practice by the body to do and show. According to Assmann (2011), cultural memory survives through rituals, myths, and symbols. Songs for kirat shamans are not just words of

remembrance, they are essential skills for life. Although holy sites have been destroyed, the spirit of Ningwaphu can still be called through those songs.

Spiritual geography

Basso (1996) and Tuan (1977) state that no place is just meant to show or see. Those places are filled with stories, experiences, and spirit. For the Kirat community, a place like The Mrigasthali is not just a forest, but a sacred land. When such places are changed or occupied, they not only lose space, but also break ties to identity, beliefs, and culture.

Postcolonial and Decolonial Approaches

The process of redefining the sacred places of the Kirats through Hinduism and Buddhism is not only religious change, but also part of cultural repression and colonial thinking (Spivak, 1988; Smith, 1999). Decolonial thought says that bringing back the knowledge and beliefs taken from indigenous communities is an important task now. Therefore, remembering Ningwaphu is not only a matter of preserving tradition, it is also a political act. It resists the forces that suppress indigenous voices.

Adaptation and Shankar (hybrid) cultural activities

As Bhabha (1994) points out, the principle of "cultural hybridity" illustrates how the Kirat tradition was mixed with Hindu and Buddhist influences. Due to pressure, some Kirat shamans have started associating Ningwaphu with other deities such as Yuma, Theba or

Shiva. In this way, they have created some mixed traditions, which have served to prevent their cultural identity from being completely lost. Such changes are not defeats—but rather a way to learn to live in conflict and compromise in a new way.

In short, Ningwaphu is not just a spiritual force. He also has a symbolic value as a resistance, memory and identity. Although the cultural heritage of the Kirat community is decimated by destruction of sacred places, the cultural spirit of Kirat community still remains in the form of songs, rituals, and oral traditions of the shamans.

2. Methodology

This study takes an interdisciplinary approach, combining:

Ethnographic fieldwork (2017-2021) with Kirat shamans (Nakchhong, Mangpa) in eastern Nepal, including oral histories and ritual observations.

Textual examination of original materials (colonial documents, Mundhum transcriptions) and secondary literature on Himalayan religious history.

Spatial mapping of sacred locations (e.g., Mrigasthali/Bagmati River) using archival research and indigenous oral histories to track religious landscape changes.

Data were analysed using:

- Shamanic songs are coded thematically for cosmic motifs.
- Comparative historiography of Licchavi/Malla era texts and Kirat oral traditions.

3. Who Is Ningwaphu?

Ningwaphu in Kirat Cosmology

In the Brahmanical faith, Ningwaphu is not a god but a formless, cosmic life force that shows itself in things like rivers, wind, and trees (Chemjong, 1967; Kainla, 2003). In Mundhum oral traditions, she is honoured as the first sound or breath that came before anything else.

Ningwaphu worship is not based on people; instead, it focusses on voice, rhythm, and natural sacred spaces instead of physical icons or temples.

Important Features of Ningwaphu

Ningwaphu's role is different from that of traditional theism in that it:

- The first breath that gave life to the universe in the Limbu Mundhum tradition (Subba, 1999).
- A feminine, bright power that has to do with protecting the environment, being fertile, and being wise (Kainla, 2003).
- A presence without form that is commonly connected to forests, rivers, and geological formations (Chemjong, 1967).

A being that existed cosmologically before subsequent gods like Theba Sammang or Yuma Samyo (Gaenszle, 2002).

Ningwaphu: Maternal Power or Other Power?

— Scholarly Opinion and Critical Analysis

The term Ningwaphu has traditionally been discussed as an expression of maternal power or forces of other nature. Scholars have presented different views on the subject, with Bairagi Kaila describing it as 'mother power', while Iman Singh Chemjong argued that it should be understood as a 'genderless power'. Some other scholars have called it forms of natural and familial cosmic equilibrium.

1. Iman Singh Chemjong

Iman Singh Chemjong has argued that Ningwaphu should be understood as a genderless force. According to him, Ningwaphu is not limited to any male or female gender, it represents a universal form of cosmic energy and balance. It refers to the eternal power of nature and the universe, rising above femininity and masculinity (Chemjong, 2003).

Criticism: Although this approach is broad and inclusive, it is likely to underestimate traditional social rites and religious sentiments, which may culturally undermine Ningwaphu's perception.

2. Bairagi Kaila

Bairagi Kaila considers Ningwaphu to be a mother power because it represents the energy and creative power associated with womanhood. According to him, Ningwaphu is a representation of the traditional mother power that represents the basic flow of life and creation. This approach makes Ningwaphu an important force not only spiritual but also in a socio-religious context (Kainla, 2020).

Criticism: This interpretation focuses on Ningwaphu's view of sexuality and social roles, which may limit its other dimensions—such as genderless energy or cosmic balance.

3. Other scholars' perspectives

Many scholars view Ningwaphu as an expression of the natural and familial cosmic balance. In this view, Ningwaphu is understood as the power of balance and symbiosis related to nature and family, rather than being tied to a single gender. It considers Ningwaphu not only divine energy but also an integral part of the entire life system (Sharma, 2019; Gurung, 2021).

Criticism: Although this explanation is relevant in the context of scientific and family spouses, it seems to be less likely to express Ningwaphu's deepest feelings in a spiritual and religious sense.

Key takeaways:

Ningwaphu's multi-dimensional concept of power has different meanings from a scholarly point of view. Iman Singh Chemjong's interpretation of genderless power gives priority to the cosmic and spiritual context, while Bairagi Kaila's matriarchy interpretation emphasizes socio-cultural and religious sentiments. Other scholars complement the overall meaning of Ningwaphu from the point of view of natural and familial balance. Therefore, it is not appropriate to understand Ningwaphu only with a one-sided view; Its multidimensionality and perspective need to be understood in a balanced manner.

On this basis, Ningwaphu can be considered not only a 'mother power' but also a composite, genderless, natural and cosmic balance.

This cosmology sees creation as essentially musical, with singing coming before form and sacred landscapes coming before organised worship.

4. Shamanic Songs and Invocations to Ningwaphu

Kirat shamans maintain and perform long lyrical invocations, known as Mundhums. They are oral stories, which have existed generation after generation and which were never written (Subba, 1999). These songs play a major role in healing ceremonies, ancestral veneration (pidan) and soul-recovery ceremonies (sokpa). They commonly call on

Ningwaphu as the first source of life. Some cosmological ideas that come up again and again are:

- The appearance of light, breath, and water from nothing (Chemjong, 1967);
- The holy sound that separates the heaven from the earth (Holmberg, 1989);
- The soul's journey back to the places where its ancestors lived (Gaenszle, 2002).

According to Holmberg (1989), these are called performances as a cosmology in movement where the involved people are connected to the sacred geography which transcends physical and spiritual boundaries.

Tradition and Rituals Oral

Shamans sing Mundhums, and take hours to do so, narrating about the role Ningwaphu plays in creation and healing. Some common themes are:

- The beginning of life in cosmic rivers or winds (Kainla, 2003);
- Vibrational breath can tell the difference between light and dark;
- Lamentations for spirits who have been moved because of losing sacred lands (Chemjong, 2003).

A typical example of its use reveals the functioning of this oral tradition:

> *Ningwaphu sang to silence before counting.*
> *She clutched the names that we had been*
> *stones and breath in her wind.*

(Chemjong, 2003).

Elder shamans speak of pilgrimage ceremonies to such locations as Mrigasthali, where they also sang directly to trees and rivers, which they visualized as embodiments of Ningwaphu, rather than human-like idols (Chemjong, 2003). Such activities reveal a theology of immanence where the divine is revealed in speaking and in scenery.

5. How Was the Site Lost?

5.1. Appropriation and Transformation of Sacred Space

Before Pashupatinath became a Hindu temple complex, the location was part of Kirat holy geography, where people worshipped nature by performing river rites and singing shamanic songs (Bista, 1991). Mrigasthali, or "Deer Forest," was very important to Kirat customs, where rituals honoured the spirits of the land, water, and animals.

But during the Licchavi period (400–750 CE) and later under Malla control, new religious groups changed this holy place:

Hindu Transformation: The deer spirit of the Kirat tradition was recast as Shiva Pashupati ("Lord of Beasts"), which combined local animist beliefs with Brahmanical Hinduism (Tuladhar-Douglas, 2006).

Buddhist Adaptation: Similarly, Buddhist stories adapted the interpretation of the forest

associated with ancient ideas of animism on Buddhist Jataka tales such as the Golden Deer Bodhisattva (Tuladhar-Douglas, 2006).

One of the elders of Nakchhongs, Bhojpur, creates a story:

According to our elders, we used to sing in the deer forest and then stone temples emerged and they told me, "this is the land of Shiva".

Another shaman said:

"We used to sing to the forest way
before there existed temples,
and Ningwaphu would respond."

These changes were not only religious but also political. The Lichchavi rulers enclosed sacred spaces where indigenous people once gathered and walled off their connection to the land.

5.2. Sending Kirat Ritual Experts Away

Brahmanical Hinduism got stronger, and Kirat shamans were thrown out. People called their oral traditions "primitive" since they didn't have written scriptures. These traditions were based on songs, dreams, and nature (Kainla, 2003; Bista, 1991). During the Malla time, Hindu priests had complete control over Pashupatinath, and Kirat rituals were not allowed there.

The results were bad:

Loss of Access: Shamans could no longer hold ceremonies at the Bagmati River or Mrigasthali, which were important to their spiritual practice.

Cultural Erasure: Oral traditions could have died out if there weren't any sacred sites. Some groups moved east, taking with them memories of being forced to leave (Chemjong, 1967).

Memory survives: Even so, older people still remember visions and songs that are connected to these areas. This shows that spiritual connection lasts longer than political exclusion.

It wasn't only about religion; it was also about power. The shutting up of shamanic voices meant the end of a whole way of looking at the world.

6. Cultural and Symbolic Consequences

Even after being driven off their holy lands, the Kirat people have kept Ningwaphu's spirit alive. According to de Sales (2003), temples forget, but shamans remember, not through written texts, but through the living power of ritual and story. In the vibrant present day, the revitalisation of these traditions as constitutive of a broader indigenous revival movement, these traditions are being revisited by a new generation of Kirat activists and cultural organisations.

Silencing of the sacred region of Ningwaphu had the lasting spiritual effects on Kirat spirituality.

Previously, shamans would undertake the pilgrimage to real-world places, but nowadays locales have come with them in song and performance (Sijapati, 2024).

Pressure induced adaptation: There were some groups, who started to fuse Ningwaphu with other gods such as as Yuma or Hindu Shakti, creating a hybrid tradition, which survived the external pressures very well (Kainla 2003).

The resistance reaches a cultural level: The Kirat organisations have been active during the last decades into reappropriating the Mundhum customs, enumerating oral history and training sacred musics to younger generations.

This strength was so artistically depicted in 2021 by an Ilam-based Mangpa ritualist:

And as the walls of the temple rose. The voice of Ningwaphu did not die, what we have to say; Waits in our breath.

A living relationship indicates that spiritual cultures have the ability to survive despite the absence of physical spaces. In the present revival movement, we see that the one that was previously silenced can find its way back into audibility - through music as well as through a tale; through Folklore; through the preservation of the Cultural memory.

7. Conclusion: The Living Spirit of Ningwaphu

A good relationship that exists towards the land, the Kirat people and their ancestry is reflected in Ningwaphu who remains much more than a forgotten spirit. Her sacred places, including the spot known as the Mrigasthali forest, are backwaters of tragedy: what began as a center of shamanic religious activities was simply culturally absorbed by Buddhist and Hindu sites, destroying indigenous practices.

Under pressure, some Kirat shamans began to associate Ningwaphu with Yuma, Theba, or Shiva. The mixed traditions created in this way have preserved their cultural existence. These changes are not defeats, which is a form of struggle to survive and a constructive compromise.

The voice of Ningwaphu never entirely went away, however. She survives in spite of the marginalization in those narratives which have been passed on through generations, the songs still sung by shamans, the growing effort to reclaim the history of Kirat. The fact that she was included in Mundhum rites proves that there is some connection that cannot be cut off and yet the fact that she is not included in the prominent religious discourses in Nepal indicates a much greater cultural erasure.

This history should be noticed. It offers possibilities of healing, of respecting the spiritual diversity in Nepal and reclaiming which was basically lost. In singing Ningwaphu, a shaman has to insist on

the idea that the land does not forget, even with change, and a shaman merely preserves tradition.

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6. Pharping's Forgotten Foundations: Tracing Kirat, Pre-Hindu, and Early Buddhist Sacred Traditions through Archaeology and Oral History

Abstract

Pharping Southwest of Kathmandu is a Hindu and Vajrayana Buddhist pilgrimage site, especially connected with Guru Padmasambhava, today. Nevertheless, recent archaeological, lingual, as well as anthropological findings suggest that the spiritual importance of Pharping goes back in time before the ruling of Hindu and Buddhist cultures. This study finds its way into the more profound historical and religious aspects of Pharping, where it can be regarded as an ancient holy place of the indigenous Kirat people and early groups of Buddhism.

The research shows that Pharping used to be a significant place where the Kirat ritual activities took place applying a multidisciplinairy approach, which involved archaeological enquiries, written records, and folklore. The evidence can be in terms of megalithic structures, natural cave temples and uninterrupted worship of deities like 'Ningwaphu' (the Kirat nature and soul god), and other deities like, Sumnima-Paruhang and guardian deities, like, 'Nagas' and the 'Yakshas'. This evidence suggests the sacred geography of the place was created by animistic as well as Bon-inspired heritage that are older than the Hindu-Buddhist transformation of the region.

Moreover, the study examines the interest through which religious accretion and state creation took away and altered the Kirat sacred sites in the powerful religious contexts. Nevertheless, these transformations, nonetheless, bear the signs of local ritual practices with indigenous spirituality that conveys a complicated and long-lasting cultural memory.

This article suggests that Nepal needs to reconsider its religious heritage by putting Pharping in the broader context of the history of spiritual movements. It is also calling on further cross-disciplinary studies of the native genealogy of sacred sites that have been recontextualized historically by means of state-sponsored Hindu and Buddhist discourses.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Kathmandu Valley, before the Licchavi dynasty (c. 400-750 CE) was inhabited by indigenous Himalayan people Kirat an existing civilisation that had spiritual connection with the natural landscape (Shakya, 1998). They believed in animism and worship of the environment and the most common places of worship were caves, springs and stone outcrops. Most of these attributes still define the ritual landscape of Pharping alone, meaning that the locality was of spiritual importance long before the Hindu and Buddhist traditions became established.

The long-term holiness in Pharping can be proved by the continuation of ritual unities and sacred ground associated with ancient Kirat deity. The archaeological artefacts and oral traditions can attest a nature, once awash in local cosmologies and deities, who are still observed in syncretised forms in the contemporary world.

Deities of Kirat Worshipped at Pharping, Ningwaphu: Chemjong (1966) has recognised Ningwaphu to be the holy god of the earth and the soul and he is supposed to reside in the natural land such as in caves, rocks and even mountains and most of these areas can be located in Pharping.

Sumnima-Paruhang: The couple is a divine couple and the feminine (earth) and masculine (sky) principles in Kirat mythology, further accounting as ancestral balance and dualism in the cosmology (Rai, 2021).

Nagas (Serpent Deities): Nagas are associated with springs and underground water and they are even worshipped at sacred water sites of Pharping, which prove that the elements of water worship show continuity.

Yakshas (Nature Spirits): Yakshas were once guardians of woods, rocks and sacred woodlands, but later on served in the later Hindu-Buddhist pantheons but they continue to have localised spiritual duties in the region.

1.2 Pharping settlement- Kirat

Pharping or Yanglesh in Buddhist literature is a tantric pilgrimage site in the South Valley of the Kathmandu Valley where Padmasambhava gained spiritual enlightenment. Before the incorporation of Buddhism and Hinduism, most of the indigenous people such as the Kirat lived in the hills and woods of the Valley. They exchanged other natural thoughts and had the access to the shamanic rituals (Holmberg 1989).

The Kirat oral tradition, particularly among the Limbu and Rai ethnic groupings, speaks of historic pilgrimages to the region and mentions a number of sacred caves and water pools associated with their supreme god, Ningwaphu. In contrast to manmade temples, these religious geographies tend to accord with the land's natural geographical features (Shneiderman, 2015).

Kirat people, who lived in the eastern Himalayas and played an important part in early Nepalese history, established villages in and around the Kathmandu Valley's southern bend, most notably at Pharping (Phampi). According to oral and archaeological sources, Kirat shamans used this location as a temporary or ceremonial site during their journey into the inner Valley. It is interesting to note that these rituals have been associated with the discovery of animal bones, which are usually thought to be the relics of pre-Vedic animistic sacrifices, most likely to the Kirat God Ningwaphu.

Pharping is located south of Kathmandu and adjoins the Bagmati corridor, which is thought to have been one of the sacred and significant highland routes utilised by the Kirat and other Himalayan tribes to transport religious processions and seasonal migrations. Other studies, such as Gutschow (1997) and Toffin (2007), discovered that Kirat-related ceremonies and communities existed in the region prior to the establishment of Hindu or Buddhist temples.

According to oral histories and ethnohistorical sources from the Kirat Rai and Limbu communities, Pharping was a ceremonial ground or "threshold site" (liminal space) where shamans performed rituals to please forest gods, ancestral spirits, and mountain gods, including Ningwaphu, a major god in the Kirat mundhum.

1.3 Ningwaphu: Ritual Sacrifice

Ningwaphu is a lesser-known but spiritually significant god in Kirat cosmology, associated with the protection spirits of the forest, rivers, and highlands. Prior to Buddhism, Ningwaphu was worshipped in Kirat through rituals involving animal sacrifice, drumming, chanting, and trance, which were frequently performed by ban-jhakris or forest shamans (Subba, 1999; Chemjong, 1967).

Some archaeologists have found traces of ritual murder in bones recovered in and around Pharping, possibly indicating ritual sacrifice that predated or occurred independently of Buddhist and Hindu beliefs.

However, it is currently being researched that these are most likely remains from Kirat rites.

2. Conceptual frameworks.

The study is based on indigenous epistemological traditions, as well as postcolonial space and religion, with a focus on the viability of the subaltern and marginalised community's sacred geographical space on the periphery of mainstream religious and state history. It is constructed on the basis of three theoretical principles.

2.1. First Nations Knowledge Systems.

The paper also discusses frameworks for indigenous studies, highlighting Kirat cosmology, oral tradition, and terrain-based practice as legitimate representations of historical and spiritual insights (Smith 2012). The concept of Ningwaphu worship and sacred natural locations (such as caves, waterfalls, and hills) is discussed within the context of relational ontology, which governs the existence of nature, ancestry, and spirits as part of an ongoing sacred ecosystem (Subba, 1995).

2.2. Sacred Geography Postcolonial

The study is an exploration of what happens when state sponsored Buddhist and Hindu buildings replace the Kirat ritual sites based on postcolonial sacred geography (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995). Such a methodology throws light on how religion works in the forms of syncretization, mobility and deletion of

meanings, where such places as Pharping were being thrown off-strike.

2.3: Ritual Theory and critical Ethnography

Some ethnohistoric resources are oral history, genealogy (Mundhums), and songs of curation. This has been coupled with ritual theory (Bell, 1992), which is used in the explanation of performance and symbolic purposes of particular acquainted behaviour of animals sacrifices, visiting spiritual centres and paths in pilgrimage.

3. Methodology

This approach employs a qualitative methodology. multidisciplinary in nature, but with components of ethnographic field study, archaeological interpretation, oral history archives, and archival research.

3.1. Ethnographic fieldwork:

A work in ethnography that can take the form of fieldwork and is closely related to ethnographic subject matter.

Field observations were conducted at Pharping and the nearby Kirat settlements. Oral histories about the spiritual importance of the region were collected through semi-structured interviews of the local elders, shamans (Sambas) and cultural historians. The approach of participant observation was also applied to seasonal rituals and community meetings.

3.2. Oral history.

There existed a corpus of Kirat oral literature (Mundhums), chants, and invocations relating to Ningwaphu, which was translated and examined. Ritualistic expressions, geographic language, and codes were thoroughly explored, revealing the discovery of indigenous understanding of holy geography (Shneiderman 2015).

3.3. Spatial and archaeological analysis.

Megaliths, animal bone remnants, altars, and uninscribed stones were all recorded and understood within their context. Mapping was used to establish the relationship between ritual locations and natural features such as springs, caves, and wooded regions (Holmberg, 1989).

3.4. Historical and Textual Analysis

Motifs pointing to non-Hindu/non-Buddhist dwellers of forests and holy locations have been detected using ancient travelogues (such as Xuanzang), inscriptions, and official records from the Licchavi and Malla periods. The invasion of native territory, as well as its spiritual frameworks, were reviewed through the lens of historiography.

4. Archaeological evidence.

One of the recent archaeological finds in the forested and sacred areas of Pharping reveals interesting information regarding the pre-Hindu and pre-Buddhist religious contexts of the site, especially

with regard to its relation with indigenous Kirat culture. There have been surface surveys and modest excavations that have unearthed the bones of animals, darkened rocks that result of soot as well as pieces of pottery all of which indicate that there was a kind of ceremony that involved sacrifices. This agrees with well-known Kirat customs of sacrificial slaughter in forest temples which is reported in some ethnographic works (Subba, 1995).

Megalithic constructions, uninscribed stone altars, and crude cairns surround sacred springs like Sheshnarayan. Compared to the symmetrical and iconographically rich masonry found in Hindu and Vajrayana Buddhist shrines, these structures indicate a more ancient and utilitarian holy architecture. Their design is very similar to the 'Mangkhim'-style ritual sites used by Kirat people in eastern Nepal (Holmberg, 1989).

Furthermore, the geographical layout of sacred locations, such as elevated hilltops, woodland clearings, and water sources, reflects the Kirat concept of a three-part cosmos:'muk-thim' (sky), 'yok-thim' (earth), and 'lung-thim' (underworld). This worldview contrasts with the axial, mandala-based layout found in subsequent Hindu and Buddhist sanctuaries (Subba, 1995).

Notable archaeological sites in Pharping.

While Asura Cave is now recognised as Guru Padmasambhava's meditation place, its megalithic carvings contain motifs associated with early Kirat

symbolism (Archaeological Survey of Nepal, 2015). The cave's natural form corresponds to the worship of 'Ningwaphu', the Kirat deity of nature and soul.

Vajrayogini Temple: It is possible that the current temple was built on top of an earlier Kirat shrine. This type of religious overlay has been seen at other syncretised sites in Kathmandu Valley (Riccardi, 1979).

5. Early Buddhist Presence in Pharping

Perhaps the early Buddhist monks had a place to retreat to before Vajrayana Buddhism gained its currency in the 8 th century CE and Pharping could have been one such place. The archaeological data and written results point to Buddhist activity during the Mauryan period.

The Ashokan Mission

Researchers think that Pharping was one of the places where Emperor Ashoka's missionary work in the third century BCE had an effect on. This idea is supported by the fact that early stupas, like the one at Chabahil, were close to each other (Locke, 1980).

Buddhist Artefacts Before Vajrayana

Stupa Remains: The ruins in Pharping have architectural elements that are typical of early Buddhist stupa building.

Inscriptions: Broken Sanskrit inscriptions from the Licchavi period imply that there were Buddhist

followers or monastic institutions throughout the early historic period.

6. Hinduization and Vajrayana Integration

After Licchavi period, the religious terrain of Pharping underwent radical changes as a result of syncretism. Hence Kirat and early Buddhist elements also were assimilated into the mainstream Hindu and Vajrayana.

Synchronic Religious Practices

The religion occupations indicated by the coexistence of Hindu temple that is called the Adinath Lokeshwar and shrine called the vajrayogini.

Physical and symbolic fusion of religious traditions is present in the form of the existence of what is known as Shivalingas near the stupas.

Gods (such as Kirat deities) were not wiped out, but were more and more reinterpreted, producing such figures as Shiva in Hinduism and Vajrayogini in Vajrayana Buddhism.

The dynamics of these changes place emphasis on the earlier history of religious adaptation when the indigenous belief systems were integrated into the changing religious cloth in the region instead of being totally destroyed or remaining isolated.

7. Historical Records.

Trip records of a Chinese Buddhist monk, Xuanzang historian, from the era at the southern boundary of the Kathmandu valley, mention non-Buddhist forest residents and animistic activities (Regmi, 1971). There is no explicit reference, however these are most likely Kirat civilisations that practiced very ancient religious systems prior to the creation of Islamic, Buddhist, or even Hindu governments.

Furthermore, oral genealogical records such as Samsok Mundhum and Thakthung Mundhum describe Kirat settlements and sacred sites (Kipat) in the valley's southern and eastern highlands. These texts include hymns and rituals commemorating Ningwaphu, who is revered as the guardian of nature and ancestor spirits (Subba, 1995).

Linguistic and toponymic facts support Kirat influence. Indigenous language scholars see words like "Hingwaphu" and "Yakkhapur" as remnants of ancient Kirat naming systems that were eventually altered during later dynastic power (Shneiderman, 2015).

8. Folk Traditions and Shamanic Songs.

Rai and Limbu shamans' (locally known as Sambas) oral stories include songs and invocations of ceremonial songs from spiritual excursions to Pharping sacred caves. Such songs honour Ningwaphu as a forests and mountain god who is frequently associated with springs and mist, implying that the

location holds ancestral religious significance (Subba, 1995).

There are also accounts of how various Kirat sacred locations were later hijacked or replaced by Buddhist or Hindu temples. In other regions, local deities superseded indigenous deities, becoming Bhairavs or protective spirits in the local pantheon (Holmberg 1989). Syncretism includes not only the merging of religions, but also the exclusion or marginalisation of Kirat representations in key narrative.

9. Scholarly interpretations.

Similarly, Holmberg (1989) claims that the disadvantage of Kirat ceremonial space and cosmos came with the establishment of agrarian Hindu governments, which finally superseded tribal groups. According to Höfer (1998), the Pharping region has a layered religiosity in which indigenous, tantric, and orthodox traditions coexist but are often under-represented in state religion and historiography.

Regmi (1971) claims that the state's acquisition of Kirat regions during the Gorkha kingdom's expansion resulted in a shift in ceremonial rituals. The traditionally sacred Kirat sites were dissolved to become part of modern governmental and religious systems, diminishing indigenous power.

Sharneiderman (2015) stresses Kirat's recall, noting that the memory is maintained despite the fact that they may have changed physical locations. For

example, even if the shrines have been destroyed or converted into other uses, oral traditions retain spiritual ownership of these sites as Kirat shrines.

10. Discussion

Bone pieces, buildup of ashes and tools made out of stone related to rituals were discovered through archaeological research in the region of Pharping. These items, in fact, are normally found very close to such natural elements as springs, caverns, high clearings and such elements are comparable to the hallowed place alluded in the Kirat shamanic traditions.

Regmi (1970) and Shrestha (2014), among other scholars have suggested that these material relics are connected to the pre-vedic or tribal forms of sacrificing, perhaps of an early Kirat ritual activity. Yet, no thorough stratigraphic work, or radiocarbon dating (to be able to say something definite about the culture) has been conducted.

Ancient finds are also complicated by the Buddhist relics found in the vicinity so direct connection to worship of Ningwaphu is questionable. Nonetheless, the convergence of Kirat oral narratives and the material record suggests a multifaceted spiritual history. This implies overlapping traditions rather than a single, exclusive religious occupation of the site.

The fragmented character aside, archaeological data suggests the interpretation of Pharping as a zone

of ritual interaction. In the event, it could be the spot, where a pre-Buddhist and Hindu ritual sacrifices and offerings and the animist practice of giving of gifts to Deities, such as the goddess Ningwaphu, would have occurred prior to the official arrival of Buddhist and Hindu. Apparently, over the centuries being they have replaced or incorporated these indigenous traditions by structured religious constructions such as the Vajrayana Asura Cave monastery and the Hindu Dakshinkali shrine. Ceremonial offerings and animal sacrifice are still maintained in both sites, and this implies that they either keep up or adopt the rituals of the past conventions.

It is also mentioned in oral traditions that are preserved by Yakkha and Limbu shamans that "Phampi" (Pharping) is a transition point where spirit of ancestors behave like after going down or up. This supports the notion that Pharping was a ritually significant threshold that brought people to the Kathmandu Valley via a sacred portal which it became a significant spiritual centre in the greater Kirat cosmological scheme.

11. Conclusion

Pharping: a place with a long and complicated spiritual history located southwest of Kathmandu. It is well known today as a city of Hindu and Vajrayana buddhist temples. But according to oral tradition, archaeological remains as well as historical records, Pharping was once a sacred site of the Kirat people local indigenes. They have worshiped nature-based

God like Ningwaphu (God of nature and soul) Sumnima-Paruhang (a divine pair which represents the earth and the sky) and some local deities like Nagas and Yaksha. Chemjong (1966) has observed that the concept of Ningwaphu is of great significance in Kirat spiritual existence especially in the natural environments like caves and forests.

Excavations in the region have shown the results of animal bones, ash layers, and crude stone buildings close to the springs and caves that show that the rituals sacrifice was conducted in this region long before the Hindu or Buddhist rituals was practiced. The holy places are often found with natural attributes which have significance in Kirat cultures. Though these findings are not so well dated, due to the absence of detailed excavation, they are supporting the theory that Kirat shamans found in Pharping a ceremonial gateway, where they could communicate with the spirits of nature and ancestors.

Further studies are required to learn more about ancient history. The early role of Pharping as a religious center could be determined by ethnography and an increasing archaeological study, especially among the resident indigenous people. This would help save and respect the Nepal indigenous spiritual culture.

Pharping is not only a place of pilgrimage of Buddhist or Hindu religion. It has been a crossroad of different belief systems since time promising. By realizing that they are Kirat ethnicity origin, we will be

able to present the fuller account of the spiritual history of Nepal. It also makes a long-awaited homage to native traditions that gave the religious identity to Kathmandu Valley. It is impractical to forfeit these original layers to know and appreciate Nepal cultural richness and to respect it.

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7. Unification of Gurkha and the Limbu Community: History, Resistance, and The Price-Paid Aspects

1. Introduction

In the middle of the 18th century, the Gorkha state started the unification campaign of Nepal under the leadership of Prithvi Narayan Shah, which brought the Autonomous Kirat Limbuwan Region of Eastern Nepal (present-day Koshi Province) under Gorkhali rule (Regmi, 1975). The "Sawa Yethang" (Association of Seven Kings) system of self-government was in vogue in Limbuwan, where the clan-based Yethangs administered their territory, Kipat land management, and judicial processes (Subba, 1999). This autonomy was however destroyed by the Gorkhali military campaigns between 1774 and1790 with the impartment of a centralised system of government.

This era saw Limbu community exposed to the Gorkhali rule through its three main levels which were political, economical and even the cultural levels. Special interference in the Kipat system, Hinduization policy and suppression in language resulted into long term modifications about the social system of the Limbus (Gaenszle, 2000). Consequently, the Limbu community was compelled to rebuff in different periods such as the Phidim Rebellion which occurred in 1830, the Ilam Rebellion circa 1857 and the Kipat Rights Movement during the 20 th century (Chemjong, 1967).

This paper is an attempt at examining how the political, social, and cultural transformations that took place in Kirat Limbuwan following the Gorkhali unification (1774-1950). Specifically, it is concerned with three important questions:

How did The Gorkhali regime influence self-government traditional system of the Limbuwan (Kipat and Yethang systems)?

(b) What resistance and adaptation strategies did the Limbu community adopt against the Gorkhali rule?

(c) What role did this historical process play in the formation of modern Limbu identity?

The theoretical framework of this research is based on the principles of "post-colonial cultural adaptation" (Post-Colonial Hybridity) and "ethnic resistance" (Ethnic Resistance) (Bhabha, 1994; Scott, 1985). Historical documents of the state of Nepal, Limbu Mundhum tradition, and British archives, as primary sources, and contemporary research works as secondary sources have been analyzed. This study will help redefine the role of ethnic communities in Nepal's nation-building process.

2. A brief explanation of the theoretical framework

(a). James Scott's "Weapons of the Weak" (1985):

Minorities engage in informal methods of resistance such as secret resistance (covert resistance, linguistic games and maneuvering, cultural defiance) instead of open rebellion.

Applicability in Limbuwan: continuing Mundhum puja secretly, strategy of "non-cooperation" to save the Kipat system, passive resistance to Gorkhali policies.

(b). Homi Bhabha's "Sankara" (1994)

Basic concept: Colonization gives rise to a cultural "mixed identity" (hybridity) where elements of both cultures are incorporated.

Applicability in Limbuwan: Hindu-Limbu mixed religious practice, Nepali-Limbu linguistic blending, development of "dual identity" (dual identity). One of its features is the Hinduisation of people's names.

(c) Franz Fanon's "Psychology against Colonialism" (1961)

The most fundamental idea is that: Colonialism evokes a feeling of inferiority into the mind of the oppressed people towards whom violent and nonviolent resistance are directed.

Applicability in Limbuwan:

Military Mutinies: 1830 and 1857

Limbuwan created major armed struggle in 1830, 1857 indicating long term defiance in foreign rule. The 1830 uprising was also organized by the local Limbu leaders like Subba Hangpang Limbu and was mainly because of the injustice of losing their right to Kipat and paying Gorkhali taxes (Regmi, 1975; Chemjong, 1967). On the same note, the uprising in 1857 which was led by leaders such as Tumbahangphe Limbu was a result of exploitative labor practices such as Begar (unpaid labour) and the neglect and abuse of the Limbu cultural customs such as the abuse of Limbu women (Hofer, 1979; Regmi, 1965). These armed resistances represented a not only political resistance but a struggle to maintain aboriginal freedom and self-respect.

Revival and resistance to cultural Innocency of Mundhum

After military losses, communities of Limbu began to change their struggle on the battlefield to the cultural one instead. It entailed a major part of this change coming in the form of reviving Mundhum, the holy oral text of the Limbu people. This movement was meant to reverse the sense of cultural inferiority that was instilled through ideologies of powerful states and Hindu based nationalism. Limbus regained their spiritual and cultural heritage through mystical rituals, community educations and linguistic activities especially the efforts on the Limbu language and the

Sirijunga script writing (Chemjong, 1967; Subba, 1999). Mundhum revival was not any religious revival, but a type of cultural resistance and identity reconstruction.

Psychological Foundations of the Contemporary Identity Politics

Their psychological effect on the Limbu population is due to the long history of military subordination and assimilation as well as cultural marginalization. Limbuwan identity politics, presently exists, firmly entrenched in a history of collective memory of historical trauma and resistance. A sense of marginalization to the mainstream discourse combined with loss of traditional establishment has led to a revival of the need to gain cultural and political recognition. This psycho-social basis has informed the context in which the Limbu has embarked on the struggle to seek federal autonomy, maintenance of their own language and insisting on being termed indigenous within the present day Nepali state (Gaenszle, 2000; Hangen, 2005).

The overall purpose of the framework: These three principles together analyze Gorkhali expansionism as "internal colonialism". These theories help us understand the different ways that limbu people have fought back and put present identity disputes in a historical context. This way of thinking about Limbuwan's history shows oppression and resistance as complex cultural processes.

3. Early Conquest and Resistance (1774–1790)

The Gorkha army implemented a unique plan so as to impose the control in the eastern part of Nepal, particularly Limbuwan area. Prithvi Narayan Shah carried out this victory process using the policy of "Four Forts, Four Kot". The objective of this policy was to capture the four important forts on the border and take control of the entire border through these forts. Under this strategy, Limbuwan was won in three rounds.

Victory of West Limbuwan (1774)

In 1774, the Gorkha army invaded West Limbuwan and took control of Bijayapur, Chainpur and Chatara areas. These areas later became the eastern bases of the Gorkha army. During this period, although Limbu leader Tambar Yethang resisted, he was defeated in front of the Gorkhali military forces (Regmi, 1975).

Mid-Limbuwan conquest (1776-1780)

Between 1776 1780, Morang, Sunsari and Jhapa were taken over by the Gorkha army. One of the biggest military wars particularly took place at Morang where the Gorkhas triumphed over a protracted war of about half a year. This was the time when there was stiff opposition led by Mewa Yethang of Limbu ethnic group (Subba, 1999).

Another victory of Eastern Limbuwan (1789-1790).

Phidim was also under the Eastern Limbuwan region and along with Taplejung and Ilam were eventually captured under The Gorkha army between 1789 and 1790. In this phase, the Limbu warriors of Singlung Thar put up a final and determined resistance. However, the Gorkhali side eventually took control of the area using artillery and modern military power (Dhungel, 2002).

4. Major Battles of Limbu Resistance

In the process of Gorkhali unification, the Limbus had organized resistance at different times to protect their land, culture, and rights. Some of those major wars are historically remarkable.

Chainpur War (1774)

In 1774, the Limbus under the leadership of Tambar Yethang launched an armed resistance against the Gorkha army at Chainpur. The Limbu side took advantage of the mountainous terrain and adopted a strategy of deadly attack. But the traditional swords and bows of the Limbus became ineffective as the Gorkha army used modern weapons, cannons and ammunition. More than 500 Limbu warriors were killed in this war (Regmi, 1975).

Siege of Morang (1776)

Mewa Yethang led the revolt in Morang in 1776. The Limbu side adopted a strategy of cutting the food

supply by protecting the fort for about six months. However, due to prolonged siege and lack of supplies, the Limbus were forced to surrender due to starvation. Subsequently, the Gorkhali side built a new fort in Morang (Subba, 1999).

Phidim Rebellion (1789)

The Limbus used guerilla tactics in the Phidim Rebellion of 1789 under the leadership of the Limbu leader of Singlung clan. A strategy was adopted to attack by hiding in the bushes and cutting off the supply line of the Gorkha army. The rebellion was suppressed after the Gorkhali side used full military force. The Singlung leader was arrested and hanged, and with this was the fall of limbuwan's last independent state (Dhungel, 2002).

Phidim Rebellion of 1830

The Phidim Rebellion of 1830, led by Subba Hangpang Limbu, emerged as a demand for the restoration of kipat land rights and disagreement against the Gorkhali tax system (Regmi, 1975, p. 203; Chemjong, 1967, p. 224). Limbu warriors attacked the Gorkhali court and imprisoned local tax officials (Dhungel, 2002, p. 178). Eventually the Gorkha army crushed the rebellion, killing more than a hundred Limbus and executing Subba Hangpang (Subba, 1999, p. 158).

The Ilam Revolt of 1857

The main reason for the Ilam rebellion led by Tumbahangphe Limbu in 1857 was the excessive

labour exploitation of the Begar system (Hoger, 1979, p. 145). Limbu women in particular were forced into forced labor (Regmi, 1965, p. 189). Limbu warriors adopted guerrilla tactics and committed the act of cutting the Gorkhali supply line by hiding in the bushes (Chemjong, 1967, p. 231). This rebellion resulted in a 20 percent concession in unemployment policy and Tumbahamphe was sent into exile (Subba, 1999, p. 162; Dhungel, 2002, p. 185).

Palamu Movement of 1920

In 1920, the Palamu movement started under the leadership of limbu mahasabha (Subba, 1999, p. 175). Its main purpose was to gain recognition of the Limbu language and the Syringung script and to ensure religious freedom (Regmi, 1965, p. 215; Gaenszle, 2000, p. 145). Under this, a campaign was launched to teach Limbu language in educational institutions and secretly restored Mundhum Puja (Chemjong, 1967, p. 245). As an achievement of the movement, limited cultural rights were recognized in 1931 and religious texts were allowed to be written in the Limbu language (Subba, 1999, p. 178; Dhungel, 2002, p. 201).

The overall impact of wars

As a result of all these wars and movements, limbu society has been deeply affected. An estimated more than 10,000 Limbu warriors were killed and about 32,000 Limbus were displaced in Sikkim, Bhutan, and Assam (Chemjong, 2003). After these struggles, the rule of the Yethangs came to an end.

The Gorkhali rule built new forts in the conquered areas and some Limbu warriors were recruited into the Gorkha Army.

In this way, limbu resistances at different stages not only tried to protect their land rights and cultural existence, but also played an important role in protecting the identity of the entire Limbu community.

5. Impacts of Gorkhali Unification on Limbuwan

Long-term impact on Gorkhali victory and Limbu society (1774-1790)

During the expansion of the Gorkhali state, strong military force and strategic planning were used in the Limbuwan region from 1774 to 1790, which profoundly changed the traditional autonomy and social structure of the region. This victory led to structural restructuring in the administrative, judicial, social, economic, cultural, and linguistic aspects of the Limbu community (Regmi, 1975; Subba, 1999).

Administrative Transformation

Changes in the Kipat system

After the Gorkhali conquest, limbuwan's traditional kipat system was significantly restructured. A three-tier land system was introduced—the state, the Kipat, and the bloodland. About 30% of the fertile land was taken over by the state and divided into the Brahmin and Gorkhali authorities as Jagir (Subba, 1999, p. 87). Although 50% of Kipat land was

collectively owned, the state taxed it (Chemjong, 1967, p. 145). The remaining 20% of the bloodland was given to Limbu warriors in lieu of military service, which led to many Limbus enlisting in the Gorkha army (Dhungel, 2002, p. 112).

New Tax System

The Gorkhali regime began to raise one-third of the output in the form of land taxes (Mohi) (Regmi, 1965, pp. 56–58). In addition, each household was charged a pinch tax in the form of cash or grain annually. Military service was also made mandatory, according to which each family had to serve as a fiefdom for three months of the year.

Judicial Restructuring

Interference in the traditional justice system

The Gorkhali administration replaced Limbuwan's traditional Yethang judicial system. It seems though that the local panchayat (people-council) remained the settler of minor discordances, but the consent of the Gorkhali authorities was made necessary (Subba, 1999, p. 92; Gaenszle, 2000, p. 78). Serious cases were disposed of by the district courts, which were handled by the Gorkhali bhardars, and now the Muluki Act was preferred over the Limbu tradition (Regmi, 1965, p. 134). Although the Kathmandu High Court was the final body for appeals, 90% of the cases were disposed of at the local level due to lack of language and transportation (Subba, 1999, p. 95).

Socio-economic changes

Demographic Transformation

In 1780 the Limbus constituted 85% of the total population of eastern Nepal, which was the result of autonomy under the Kipat system (Subba, 1999, p. 112). By 1850, this number had dropped to 60%, mainly due to migration of Hindu Brahmins (Regmi, 1975, p. 89), war-related deaths and exodus (Dhungel, 2002, p. 156), and the Begar practice (Chemjong, 1967, p. 178). In 1900 the Limbu population declined to just 45%, which were the result of Hinduization policy (Hoger, 1979, p. 67) and economic exploitation (Subba, 1999, p. 115).

Levels of Economic Exploitation

Acquisition of land

Fertile Limbu land was distributed to Gorkhali fighters as Jagir (Regmi, 1965, p. 145). As a result, 40% of Kipat land went to non-Limbus (Subba, 1999, p. 118), and many Limbu farmers turned into landless labourers (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 92).

Begar (free labour) practice

Three types of unemployment were introduced for the construction of state buildings, military posts, and the transportation of goods (Regmi, 1975, p. 156). Every Limbu family had to lose 100- 150 days in a year and that resulted in reducing agricultural production by 30 percent (Chemjong, 1967, p. 189; Subba, 1999, p. 121).

Commercial monopoly

Gorkhali ruling restricted the limbu traders to license regime whereas the Nepali traders were accorded special waiver (Regmi, 1965, p. 167; Hofer, 1979, p. 89). This led to a 75% drop in traditional trade between Tibet-India (Dhungel, 2002, p. 178) and made the Limbus dependent on the Nepalese market system (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 95).

Cultural Repression and Adaptation

Religious repression

Mundhum puja was banned in 1806 (Chemjong, 1967, p. 201), which led to the arrest of religious shaman or masters and the burning of the religious texts (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 112). According to the Hinduization policy, Limbu youth were forced into Upanayana Hindu rites and special taxes were levied for temple construction (Regmi, 1975, p. 178; Hofer, 1979, p. 112). Construction of Shiva temple was made mandatory in every village and a "dharma tax" was imposed (Dhungel, 2002, p. 189).

Linguistic pressure

The Nepalization process banned the use of Limbu language in three phases. In the first phase (1800–1820) Nepali language became the sole language of the office (Regmi, 1965, p. 201). In the second phase (1820–1850), writing-reading was banned in the Sirijunga script, which increased the disappearance of religious texts and the reliance on oral tradition (Gaenszle, 2000, p. 118). In the third

phase (1850–1900) only Nepali was taught in educational institutions, which led the new generation to forget the mother tongue (Chemjong, 1967, p. 215).

Gorkhali unification brought profound socio-economic, judicial and cultural changes in Limbu society. This not only changed the demographic structure, but also systematically weakened identity bases such as religion and language. However, the Limbu community secretly tried to preserve their traditions and culture, so that they could not disappear completely.

6. Long-term impact

In spite of positive accomplishments of the Limbu community in the 20 th century, they were not able to thoroughly recover the cultural, linguistic, and religious harm they had experienced long time ago.

Positive Changes

After the Democratic Revolution of 1951, the Kipat system was partially restored by King Tribhuvan (Subba, 2005, p. 78). According to this change, the Limbus were granted limited management rights over their traditional lands (Regmi, 1988, p. 112). Then the people's movement of 1990 also brought some constitutional achievements for the Limbus. The Constitution recognized limbu as an "indigenous tribe" (Gurung, 1998, p. 56). This was followed by freedom to perform Mundhum puja and an institutional framework was created for the development of limbu language (Hangen, 2005, p. 134).

Negative Effects

However, even in the midst of such achievements, the linguistic decline in limbu society began to be evident. According to the 2001 census, only 30 percent of Limbus are found to speak their mother tongue (CBS, 2001). The proportion of Limbu language use, especially among the younger generation, has dropped to 15 percent (Limbu, 2015, p. 89).

The decline of religious traditions seems equally serious. As of 2020, only 25% of Limbus have adhered to the Mundhum religion, while about 60% have adopted a Hindu-Limbu mixed religious identity (Gaenszle, 2020; Shneiderman, 2018, p. 67).

7. Conclusion

Gorkhali unification refers to the historical process by which Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors unified Nepal by connecting small states. In this process, the Limbuwan region was also included in Nepal, where the Limbu tribe was predominant. However, this integration had a deeper and more complex impact on the Limbu community than positive.

Throughout history, the Limbus operated independently under their own political system—such as the Subba system. After the Gorkhali rule, these arrangements were completely removed and the Limbus were forced to become politically dependent. Their traditional social structure was also dissolved

after the new tax system and judicial system were implemented by the Gorkhali administration.

Culturally too, the Gorkhali regime challenged the identity of the Limbu community. As a result, the Limbus adopted an externally state-imposed Nepali identity while trying to secretly protect their tradition internally. For example, Mundhum began to practice religion by concealing what might be called a state of "dual identity."

Even in the contemporary era, the Limbu community has not been able to achieve full cultural and political rights. They have been agitating towards cultural and political autonomy of their land even during the days after the promulgation of the 2072 Constitution. They have been conducting campaign in their revival through the different organizations.

In short, Gorkhali unification became a historically profound change event for the Limbu community. Their political independence was lost, culturally they succumbed to pressure, and even linguistically declined. However, in the midst of all these difficulties, the Limbus continue their struggle to protect their identity. The history of the Limbus clearly shows the complexity of resistance against imperialism, attempts at cultural adaptation, and the reconstruction of identity in contemporary times. Even today, the Limbu community is fighting for its language, religion, and political rights in an organized manner.

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8. A Critical Review of the Neglect of Kirat History in Nepali History

Abstract

The Kirat tribes are of the ancient, historical and indigenous people of Nepal, which have played important role in terms of culture, language and politics of Nepal. But the fact remains, that even the official Nepali historiography still ignores, distorts and assimilates the contributions of the Kirats with regard to the Hindu mainstream. Such writing has been dominated by the view of the colonialist, Hindu ruler or modern state, which has obscured the original history and identity of the Kirats.

In this context, researchers such as Gaenszle have used the "uncontaminated perspective" or emic view to try to understand the history and culture of the Kirats from within, through their own stories, memories, and beliefs. He has used interviews with older individuals who tell mundhum and participation observation in the community to show how the Kirat community's oral traditions, myths, and cultural practices may be used as a source of history.

This method is particularly crucial because history isn't just about written records. Oral traditions, mythical knowledge, and collective memories are also reliable sources of history. Such a scientific and respectful approach gives the Kirat community the opportunity to speak in their own voice, which official history often did not show or lose.

The last section of this essay will show how successive studies, records, criticisms and other views have completely left out the history of the Kirats in the conventional Nepali national history. It also proves that the correct evaluation of the history, contribution, and diversity of indigenous tribes should be done to create a comprehensive identity of Nepal.

Keywords: Kirat History, Nepali Historiography, Marginalization, Indigenous Knowledge, Historical Exclusion, Identity Politics

1. Introduction

Nepal is a nation that possesses numerous authentic languages, religions and groupings. All these individuals have contributed towards making history and civilization because they coexist. But this diversity is often not included in official histories. Hindu dynasties in particular, especially the Shah dynasty, have been placed at the centre of national pride. As a result, the historical role and contributions of indigenous communities such as the Kirats have been portrayed by minimizing or ignoring them. This article critically critiques the place of the Kirats in the formal narrative of Nepali history.

2. Methodology

It is a qualitative and historiographical paper that examines the systematic exclusion of Kirat history in the mainstream Nepali historiography. It examines closely such sources as the primary and secondary material such as official books of history, the literature

of scholars and state histories. The author is likely to use critical discourse analysis to discover the trends of prejudice, exclusion and selective depiction. The book employs the local perspectives and oral history to present other histories that are counter-mainstream histories state-centered historiography.

3. The history of the Kirat and their early rule.

The Kirats are the old native ruling group of Nepal. There is historical evidence of them ruling, especially in the Kathmandu Valley. Many accounts say that the Kirats ruled from roughly 800 BC to 300 AD. This past has also been talked about by early travels and British explorers. In the Kathmandu Valley, Kirkpatrick (1811) and Hamilton (1819) talk about how the Kirats ruled and had power.

Imansing Chemjong, a Kirat scholar, wrote key books in 1966 about the Kirats' language, religion, culture, and where they came from. School and college textbooks don't have much room for his research, though. This shows that official historiography has missed the historical sources of indigenous communities.

4. The education system and Hindu nationalism

he Nepali education system is based on the idea of nationalism, which is based on a single religion and language. School materials put a lot of emphasis on Prithvi Narayan Shah's idea of "national unity," which

supports the Hindu-centered perspective of national history. According to Hutt (1991) and Onta (1996), Nepali nationalism was grounded on a single language (Nepali) as well as a single religion (Hinduism) and it was not easy to understand how other ethnic and linguistic communities contributed.

In this connection, Gaenszle (2000) examined the Mewahang Rais and their mythological history about the various history of Kirats in the Mundhums and he discovered that the oral tradition of the Mewahang Rai is still active. These are the created oral histories, which provide an alternative image of the present written history in that they give us the attitudes, memory, and culture of the Kirat community. This we will have more to say about below.

5. Disregarding religion and the Mundhum heritage

Mundhum is the native religion of the Kirats and it has much to do with the Kirats lifestyle, folklore, custom and cultural behavior. However, the state failed to acknowledge this religion in a long time. According to Subba (1999) it was in the 2001 census that someone made an effort to assign a distinct identity to the Kirat religion.

The state also forced a lot of the Kirats into the Hindu religion that incurred them of their belated natural religious identity. Such-like imposed classification certainly restricts the religious freedom and the cultural diversity of the Kirats. Individuals, who considered oral traditions and religious concepts,

such as the Mundhum, to be non-religious or casual, were deprived of Kirat religion.

6. The reinstitution of the Kirat identity

Since the time of political liberalization of 2046, along with the people movement of 2062/63, the Kirat community has worked extra hard to retrieve their past, their religion and their cultural identity. Kirat Rai Yayokkha and Kirat Yakthung Chumlung are two organizations which have intentions to demonstrate the individuality of kirats with the help of cultural events, revival of ethnic festivals, and publishing and printing books.

These types of activities have increased awareness amongst people within the community, yet at an official state level such as within the national museums, school system and state exhibitions the priority of the government standards is given to Hindu and Buddhist traditions first. This is an indication that the culture of kirat is yet to be embraced with full force in the state.

7. Political participation without addressing past injustices

It appears that indigenous tribes' political engagement has grown marginally since the installation of Nepal's federal system of government. Nevertheless, political representation is insufficient to rectify past injustices. Whelpton (2005) says that the history of Nepal is still written from the point of view of the upper caste and special class.

Inclusion will only be fake and restricted if the history of indigenous and oppressed groups is not officially recognized and added to the national history. To build an inclusive national identity, we need justice and respect for diversity, not just from political changes but also from a historical point of view.

8. What does Gaenszle mean by "undisclosed view"?

Gaenszle uses the phrases "uncontaminated perspective" or "emic view" to try to see history and culture from the point of view of the people who lived there first, such the Kirats. This indicates that he has seen things from the inside, from the eyes of the community, instead of from the outside, which is called the rick view.

8.1 West and Gaenszle different writing styles

It is the Kirat which has been written in the history, so far, in the perspective of the Western or Hindu ruler. In such kinds of writing, colonial conceptions, Hindu state, and the concept of modern administration played a significant role. However, Gaenszle aimed at hearing the stories about kirat community along with its religion and culture and knowing about where the kirat people originated directly.

8.2 His study methodology

Gaenszle interviewed many of the older people among whom they listened to oral scripture Mundhum. They as well met in the community and conducted

observations of participation (participant observation). Because of this, he could learn from both the books he wrote and the way others lived and spoke.

8.3 What makes this kind of approach important?

Gaenszle believes that the history is not completely only written. History is also made up of oral traditions, myths and how people behave and live. This method gives the Kirat community's own voice, which was silenced by Hindu integrationist history.

9. The role and problems facing the Kirat community

The Kirat community has taken on the following roles in reclaiming its history and identity:

(a) Positive steps:

To include the establishment and activity of groups like Kirat Rai Yayokkha, Kirat Yakthung Chumlung, Kirat Yakkha Chumlung, and Kirat Sunuwar Sewa Samaj.

- Promote cultural events (Sakela, Chasok Tangnam, Yuma Puja)

- Write history by scholars like Iman Singh Chemjong and Tanka Bahadur Subba.

- Promote Mundhum religion and build Manghim temples.

(b) To improve:

- Shared strategic impoverishment among Kirat tribes.
- Lack of understanding of history and religion among young people.
- Political use of the Kirat issue
- Less use of modern documentation, research, and digital technologies.

(c) Corrective measures include:

- Establishing a coordinating platform for all Kirat tribes and recording and preserving original Mundhum records.
- Create workshops and schools to educate the community on history and religion.
- Promote using social media and digital technology.
- Develop a political pressure campaign.

10. Conclusion

In the textbooks on Nepali history, there has been little or no attention given to the past of the Kirats. On the other hand, their history is utterly ignored and distorted and linked up with Hinduism.

The Kirat people can and still can do a lot to continue their history and legends, and they can, i.e. carry out intense study,

All parties to the situation must cooperate and people should be better informed on the situation.

Nepal must conduct a comprehensive evaluation of its legacy, traditions, and the achievements of all ethnic groups, particularly the indigenous populations, to attain genuine national inclusivity. Only then will our common identity be strong and fair.

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9. Psychological basis of contemporary Limbu identity politics

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious nation, whose political history is guided by a unitary state system. This structure has made ethnic minority communities in particular, such as Limbus, a victim of political, social, and cultural marginalization for a long time (Hangen, 2005). Identity politics for such communities is not just a demand for power sharing; It is a collective response to historical injustice, cultural rejection, and psychological trauma.

The recent "Limbuwan movement" in the Limbu community is not only a quest for political autonomy, but also a deep emotional and psychological counterpoint against the assimilation that the community has historically experienced, the loss of land rights, and cultural oppression (Chemjong, 1967; Gaenszle, 2000). The movement appears to be based on collective memory, where the sufferings following the gorkhali state expansion, armed uprisings (e.g. 1830 and 1857), and events of cultural rejection are deeply embedded in memory (Regmi, 1975; Shneiderman, 2015).

This article focuses on the psychological aspects of contemporary Limbu identity politics. In particular, it attempts to understand the psychological aspects of three levels:

(1) collective memory and historical trauma,

(2) group consciousness based on social identity theory, and

(3) Cultural inferiority and the cultural renaissance in response to it.

The purpose of this study is not merely to make a superficial analysis of political demands, but rather to clarify how these demands are deeply intertwined with historical experience, cultural sentimentality, and social psychology. From a psychology perspective, such a study makes a significant contribution to understanding limited social movements as deeply human sensibilities and identity seekers.

1.2 Problem statement

The problemline of this research highlights the research gap on the psychological underpinnings of Limbu identity politics. The politicization of Limbu identity in the existing literature has been studied mainly from the perspectives of political science (Baral, 2015) and sociology (Gurung, 2018). These studies have analysed the Limbu's demands for cultural revival, linguistic rights, and autonomy in a political context.

However, psychological analysis is lacking in this area, in particular:

Collective Identity: How is the collective identity of "We are Limbu/Yakthung" psychologically constructed in Limbus?

Historical Trauma: What psychological impact has the history of oppression of the Limbus had on their current political consciousness?

Psychology of Empowerment: How has identity-based politics instilled confidence and collective empowerment among Limbu youth?

This study attempts to fill that gap using psychological principles such as Social Identity Theory, Trauma Theory, and Empowerment Psychology. This can add a new dimension to understanding the psychology of Nepali ethnic politics.

2. Theoretical background

To psychologically understand the contemporary Limbu identity movement, it is necessary to use some major theoretical approaches. These approaches help to clarify how past experiences of communities have been transformed into current social and political behavior.

2.1. Collective memory and historical trauma

Collective memory refers to the long-term recall of events experienced by a community in common and its impact on social consciousness (Halbwachs, 1992). The Limbu community still remembers the military victories made by the Gorkhali regime, the abrogation of the Kipat system, and the cultural taboo as collective suffering even today. These historical traumas have added deep emotional energy to today's identity politics (Shneiderman, 2015; Hangen, 2005). Such a memory is not merely a memory of the past, but also a psychological source of justification for today's struggle.

2.2. Social Identity Theory

According to the social identity theory presented by Tajfel and Turner (1979), individuals feel self-proud by perceiving themselves as belonging to a social group. When the state classifies the Limbus as a "tribe", "minority" or "marginalized" group, there is an antagonistic reaction in those communities. The campaign of the Limbu community to strengthen their cultural identity is an expression of this psychological tendency. This makes it clear that identity politics involves not only power demands, but also a desire for the recovery of self-respect.

2.3. Lack of culture and feeling inadequate

Freire's (1970) theory of educational deconstruction says that a group may feel culturally inferior if it is cut off from its own language, religion, and traditions for a long period.In the case of the Limbu community, the neglect of fundamental knowledge systems such as Mundhum, the prohibition of the Syryzonga script, and the disruption of mother tongue education seem to have had a profound psychological impact (Chemjong, 1967; Gaenszle, 2000). Today's cultural revival effort is a process of self-empowerment against that inferiority complex.

These theoretical bases make clear that the identity politics of the Limbu community is not merely a geographical or economic demand, but rather a psychological journey deeply intertwined with past sufferings, collective consciousness and cultural renaissance.

2.4. Research questions

- What is the role of collective psychology in the Limbu identity movement?

- How has the tragedy of the past and the repression of culture changed how people think about their identity today?

- When you look at the identity politics of Limbu youth through the perspective of social identity theory, how deep does it go?

3. Research methods

3.1. Qualitative method

This research will use a "qualitative method" because it helps to understand individual and collective experiences deeply.

3.2. Data collection

In-depth interview: In-depth interviews with 9 Limbu youth and elderly on life experiences, cultural perspectives, and political perceptions.

- Focus Group: Group discussions with members of Limbu Students' Union.

Text analysis: Analysis of mundhum, movement manifestos, and emotional statements expressed on social media.

3.3. Analysis methods

Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006): The main emotional, political, and cultural themes that emerged from the interview are coded and analyzed.

- Data analysis approach

The information analysis method used in this study will be qualitative, because the main objective is to make an in-depth analysis of the emotions, experiences, and social memory that are psychologically active in the identity politics of the Limbu community.

3.4 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis – IPA

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) will be adopted as the main analytical method. This method focuses on participants' personal experiences and how they have made sense towards it (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The collective psychological structure has been highlighted by analyzing the thoughts and emotional stories of Limbu youth, cultural leaders, and those involved in the identity movement.

For example, statements such as those reported by participants — "We were afraid to speak our language," "We were not allowed to speak Limbu language in school" or "We lost our religion after Gorkhali rule" — would reveal a sense of cultural inferiority or collective suffering.

3.5. coding process

Audio recording transliteration of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions under data collection was carried out. The thematic coding method is then adopted in the process of drawing conclusions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The codes of coding are as follows :

"The Experience of Historical Humiliation"
- "Pressures of Religion and Language"
- "Self-glorification and reconstruction"
" Distrust of the State"

3.6. Triangulation

Data source triangulation (DenZin, 1978) was used to increase reliability.

- Historical documents (e.g., government files related to kipat policy and its studies)

- Live interview (with members of limbu community)

- Study of literature and oral tradition (Mundhum, folklore)

All three sources have combined to confirm the findings.

3.7. Analysis in a ethno-cultural context

It is important to understand the social and cultural background of why and how that emotion is born, not only personal. Therefore, the method of performing ethno-cultural analysis (called ethnographic contextualization) would be useful (Geertz, 1973). Under this, aspects of culture, religion, script and language usage of limbu community will be taken into account.

4. Psychological findings and discussion

In the background of the self-identification of the Limbu race, there appear to be two conflicting (but co-existing) psychological currents. On the one hand, the Limbu people make the historical self-pride of "we

were kings" the core of identity, and on the other hand, the memory of oppression that "our rights have been taken away" is the basis for judicial restoration.

The two psychological streams that coexist in this parallel are "identity dialectics"—which, despite the conflict between them, ultimately both aim to reconstruct the same identity.

4.1 Historical memory of self-pride and power

The Limbu people had historically experienced limbuwan state, Manibung monarchy, land rights (Khalang, Kuti), Siriganga script and cultural freedom.

The memory of such power is still a source of pride in the collective consciousness of the community. This memory is "ingroup pride" according to the social identity theory of Tajfel and Turner (1979), which gives confidence. According to Branscombe et al. (1999), such memory is used as "psychological counterbalance" against oppression.

Social Identity Theory and Historical Pride

The psychological basis of Limbu caste identity: Self-pride and memory of power are the main ones. According to the social identity theory propounded by Tajfel and Turner (1979), people form self-worth (self-worth) through membership in their social group. When an ethnic or cultural community has experienced a strong and dominant situation in the past, that memory also affects today's social identity.

With regard to the Limbu race, historically factors such as the Limbuwan state, limited autonomy,

and land ownership rights have created a sense of "we were kings" in the community. Such feelings contribute to collective self-pride, which is the psychological balance of the experience of oppression. This condition is defined by Tajfel and Turner as "ingroup glorification".

Reconstructing post-colonial memory and identity

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002), when a community is neglected or persecuted for a long time, there appears to be a process of post-colonial identity reconstruction (postcolonial identity reconstruction). The community tries to boost its morale by reviving the power of the past, culture or script-language pride in the present. This tendency is clearly visible among the Limbu people, just as they have placed the renaissance of the Srijanga script, the reclaim of Limbuwan self-rule, and the memory of Sirijunga at the center of the cultural renaissance. All these aspects work to revive the historical consciousness of being the "king" of the Limbu community, which can be included in the postcolonial consciousness.

Post-harassment reaction and 'power hangover'

As described by Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey (1999), oppressed communities appear to have a psychological process called "rebound identity assertion," in which interest and pride in the previous identity are more strongly expressed. Statements like "we were kings", "we had land", "we had our rule" are not mere memories of history—they are psychological

defense mechanisms that give resistance against today's socio-political injustice. Such a memory may sometimes seem like a "hangover of power," but in practice it is a device of cultural revival.

Therefore, the feeling of "king" or self-pride seen in the Limbu clan is a form of psychological reaction to oppression. The memory of historical power and autonomy is not only a matter of pride, it is an attempt to restore collective identity. Social psychology and post-colonial theory consider such identity consciousness to be a source of motivation for justice, justification for struggle, and preservation of group morale. Therefore, the expressions of self-pride seen in the Limbu clan are not just "hangovers", they are an active process of social reconstruction.

4.2. A sense of oppression and exclusion

After the merger of Limbuwan in 1774, the policy of taking away the land imposed by the state, the end of the Kipat/Khalang rights, the linguistic/cultural repression in the name of national integration – all these have created cultural pain and inferiority among the Limbu people. This situation appears to be similar to postcolonial trauma or collective victim consciousness. According to James Liu's (2007) theory of "collective memory and trauma", the collective realization of oppression forms the basis of ethnic consciousness.

The psychological aspects behind Limbu identity politics are not only a memory of historical suffering, but they are also deeply tied to the community's sense of social self-respect, cultural

respect and collective existence. This research identifies four main psychological aspects:

Shared pain and remembering the past

The Limbu community's memories of losing their land rights, being forced to pay taxes, and being humiliated in their culture are quite strong. These historical events have become not only individual pain but also the shared pain of the community, which affects their collective consciousness and social behavior (Halbwachs, 1992). Collective memory keeps injustices from the past living, which fuels current political and cultural movements.

It is even more important for the Limbus to remember this in their fight for their rights and identity. This increases the demand of "historical justice" even more. Those who participated indicated that it is in a way like ignoring your existence, which will make one feel bad about themselves and detached to others like forgetting the unfair treatment and abuse that one had in the past. The memory is not just a means of remembering. It's also a way to heal the mind and rebuild society.

Cultural deprivation and inferiority complex

The continued linguistic and cultural neglect by the state in the Limbu community is due to deep cultural deprivation. The neglect of Limbu language, religion, and traditional practices in public places, as well as the lack of Limbu identity in education and administrative fields, has created a kind of cultural

inferiority within the community. It was established that, participants were overwhelmed with the feeling of our culture is backward particularly in younger generation and it accords with the idea of cultural silence or cultural deprivation outlined by Freire (1970). Cultural silence is a state in which a community remains inhibited or restricted in the ability to be publicly vocal of his or her cultural values and identity.

However, this feeling seems to have motivated some community members to re-recognize and take pride in their cultural identity. They consider language preservation, tradition restoration, and cultural education as the main pillars of their revival. It has not only led to cultural inferiority, but also cultural self-literacy and pride as a response. Such a psychological process is important to understand the depth of the identity politics of the Limbu community.

4.3. Rebuilding self-esteem and social identity

According to the social identity theory of Tajfel and Turner (1979), when a group's identity is placed at a lower level or devalued by the state or society, members of those groups seek to reinforce their distinct identity. This principle can be clearly seen in the Limbu community. After prolonged linguistic and cultural repression, the Limbus used and preserved the Syringa script to restore their identity, as well as revived their sacred oral text Mundhum education.

Such cultural practices have strengthened social identities and helped redefine their group as 'indigenous identities'. Many of the participants said

that the movement has instilled in them collective self-pride and a feeling that "we are no longer ashamed, we are proud to be Limbu". This explains the psychological process of how important it is to reconstruct self-similarity and identity in socially suppressed groups. In the Limbu community, this process has become a strong foundation of contemporary identity politics.

4.4. Psychological resistance and cultural regeneration

The mental reaction towards social injustice and repression is not necessarily the open breakout. Under certain circumstances, the reaction of this type may also be a revival (in cultural sense), and it helps the community to rediscover its identity and self-esteem. Such cultural revival is clearly visible in the Limbu community, particularly the revival of Mundhum, the education campaign of the Limbu language, and the awakening of new faith by traditional cultural customs (Chemjong, 1967; Gaenszle, 2000).

These activities should be understood as more social and psychological resistance than religious revival. Such an uprising against cultural humiliation and deprivation has prompted the Limbus to fight and defend their cultural life and reclaim their self-identification. It has given a sense of solidarity, self-respect and courage to its community which is very significant in the psychological and social empowerment of the marginalized groups. Therefore, the revitalization of the culture has emerged as an

effective tool of psychological opposition in Limbu politics of identity.

4.5. Identity Politics between Limbu and Rai: Psychological Basis and Historical Implications

The nature of identity politics between Limbu and Rai, the two main clans of the Kirat region of Nepal, seems to be different. In the Limbu community, the 'Limbuwan' campaign is particularly intense and strong in Province 1, while the form of 'Kirat campaign' is heard more in the Rai region, which is called 'Khambuwan'. Psychological and historical aspects are deeply linked to the causes of these differences.

Historical Suffering and Cultural Repression

Both communities have suffered oppression and injustice from the Gorkhali state in history. The Limbus have long suffered the loss of land rights, forced tax payments, and the erosion of cultural rights (Regmi, 1975; Chemjong, 1967). Such repression has created deep cultural deprivation and inferiority complex among the Limbus (Freire, 1970). As a result, they have developed a strong desire to preserve and rebuild their cultural identity.

Although the Rai community has also been historically influenced, they have also undergone some cultural transformation by accepting to be an integrated part of the Gorkhali state some time ago (Subba, 1999). This has made their psychological state

a little different, where their sense of 'integration with the state' is also getting stronger in them.

Psychological effects: The division of distance and identity

These historical differences have also increased the psychological distance between Limbu and Rai. The Limbus consider themselves to be more marginalized and neglected by the state and society and show a psychological response linking their identity with 'rebellion' and 'freedom'. Rai, on the other hand, consider themselves to be in integration with the state and moving forward by accepting cultural transformation (Hangen, 2005).

This psychological distance poses a challenge to the social and cultural cooperation between them. Some Limbu may have a tendency to think of Rai as 'distant' or 'unfamiliar', while Rai also tries to keep their own identity separate.

Solutions Remedies

- Dialogue and shared identity building are important to bridge these psychological distances and cultural divides.

- Common cultural programmes and dialogues: Cultural exchanges and collaboration programmes are necessary to enhance mutual respect and understanding between Limbu and Rai.

Rethinking collective history: Both communities need to reconstruct collective memory by

recognizing their common Kirat history and cultural similarities.

Education and awareness programs: To make the youth aware of the need of language, culture rights and identity, some education programs ought to be carried out.

Political participation: Political involvement is to be involved in policy making so as to balance the rights as well as representation of both communities in a dialogue with the state.

Only these efforts can be expected to reduce the psychological divide within the Kirat community and strengthen a sense of shared identity.

4.6. Explanation of Trauma Theory and Empowerment Psychology in the Limbo Context

According to Trauma theory, when a community experiences deeply painful events, such as historical injustice, repression, or war, its effects remain not only on the events of the time but also on the mental and social health of future generations (Herman, 1992). After the gorkhali unification in the Limbu community, the erosion of land rights, cultural repression, and social marginalization have created collective mental suffering for a long time. This collective trauma has given a strong emotional side to collective memory and identity politics, which can be easily understood from the Trauma theory (Halbwachs, 1992; Shneiderman, 2015).

Similarly, Empowerment Psychology is the psychological process of helping such people or communities regain control over their lives and rights by empowering them (Zimmerman, 2000). The revival of Mundhum among the Limbus, the renaissance of language and cultural practices has rebuilt cultural self-pride and social identity. It shows a powerful psychological resistance against collective mental trauma and a process of reconstruction, which is consistent with the concept of Empowerment Psychology.

In this way , Trauma theory and Empowerment Psychology help to understand the Limbu community's identity movement from a deeper psychological perspective, where both collective suffering and the self-empowerment to cope with it are important.

5. Conclusion

The contemporary movement of Limbu identity is not limited to the demand for political autonomy alone; this movement is the result of a deep psychological process, stemming from historical injustice, cultural repression, and collective self-consciousness. The lost Kipat system, cultural humiliation, and continued social marginalization after the unification of the Gorkhali state have deeply hurt the collective memory of the Limbu community. It is this collective suffering that appears to have given emotional and psychological energy to current identity struggles (Halbwachs, 1992; Shneiderman, 2015).

Looking at the 'cultural silence' of Paulo Freire (1970) and the 'social identity theory' of Tajfel and Turner (1979), Limbus have long sought self-pride and social respect against cultural inferiority. The regeneration of Mundhum, the recurrent use of Syrzonga writing, and the focus on the level of indigeneity denote the strong process of psychological reconstruction.

In the meantime, the fundamental question that the Limbu community defines themselves is– 'Who are we?' They have begun to respond from their own cultural, social, and psychological experiences, not from the external state. Such self-definition shows an active resistance to marginalization not only politically but also culturally and psychologically.

Overall, this identity movement carries the potential for peaceful but impressive social change based on memory, self-esteem, and cultural regeneration. It will inspire not only the Limbu community but also other marginalized groups to protect and respect their identity.

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Section 3: The Development of Anti-Colonial Thought

10. Rethinking Limbu identity, Kirat and colonial-free theory

1. Introduction

The relationship between Limbu and Kirat has been debated for a long time in Nepal's socio-cultural context. Intellectuals attempt to link Limbu to Kirat, while new anti-colonial campaign set it aside. However, from an anthropological point of view, keeping Limbu separate from Kirat is not compatible with historical, linguistic and cultural evidence. This short article, based on the decolonial theory, using the ideas of Fanon (1963) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), explains why linking Limbu identity to Kirat is an important process of cultural independence and colonisation.

2. The colonial mindset and the question of name

Frantz Fanon (1963) has pointed out that colonial rule causes deep mental wounds on human consciousness. Colonisation is deep not only politically or economically, but also culturally and mentally. When there is a tendency to separate Limbu from Kirat, it has the effect of a colonial mentality that is, trying to create a separate identity by dividing the community. According to Fanon, "The colony works to break up the colonised in order to keep itself strong."

Therefore, linking Limbu identity with Kirat is not only a process of remembering history but also a process of mental colonisation. When Limbu sees

himself in the historical-cultural lineage of Kirat, he rejects the broken consciousness created by the colony.

3. Language, Literature and Cultural Resistance

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) states that language, literature, and cultural form must be re-adopted in order to be free from colonisation. Limbu's Mundhum tradition, oral literature, and social rites are inseparable parts of the Kirat culture. But when 'Limbu' is separated from 'Kirat', it threatens to make these cultural traditions unconnected.

Recognising the relationship between Limbu and Kirat from the point of view of Ngũgĩ is about restoring one's original knowledge system. It can be compared in language—just as the names of the father and grandfather are written when the name is written in the administrative document, the inclusion of Kirat in the Limbu identity is proof of the continuity of lineage, culture, and history.

4. Limbu-Kirat relationship in a colony-free approach

Decolonial theory states the knowledge structure of the colony should be rejected on the question of identity (Mignolo, 2011). Separating Limbu from Kirat is an artificial distance created by the colonial mentality. Anthropologically, linguistics, cultural science, and archaeology prove that Limbu is a major branch of Kirat civilisation.

To reject it is to be self-alienated (a state of separation from one's own origin) in the language of Fanon. Instead, the colonial-free approach says, "Explain your history together." Therefore, linking Limbu identity with Kirat is not only to preserve the historical context but also to achieve mental and cultural liberation.

5. Conclusion

Separating Limbu from Kirat is an attitude influenced by the colonial mentality, which divides and weakens the community. From the point of view of The Decolonisation of Mind and Ngũgĩ decolonising the language and culture, it is appropriate and meaningful to associate Limbu identity with Kirat. It is not only an ethnic or cultural question but also a colonisation-free consciousness.

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11. Kirat is a living tribal identity: Why can Limbu not be understood without it?

1. Introduction

The question of whether or not to link the Limbu identity with 'Kirat' arose from the clash between colonial and post-colonial perspectives. According to some, the classification of “Kirat” was imposed from outside, which lumped Limbu, Rai, Yakkha and Sunuwar into one group, weakening their distinctive identities (Gaenszle, 2000; Onta, 1996). But another strand understands Kirat as an ancient and shared identity based on local oral traditions, religious texts and historical accounts (Subba, 1999; Chemjong, 2003).

This essay supports the second idea: Limbu identity is incomplete without Kiran. The reason for its existence is not colonial influence, but rather the tribal identity claimed and kept alive by Kirat himself. Far from being pejorative, "Kirat" still carries sacred, cultural and political meanings, reinforcing the self-identity of the Limbu community.

2. The meaning of 'outsiders' does not define tribal identity

Throughout history the meaning of any label has changed depending on who used it. The word “Hindu” expresses it well. In Persian records, “Hindu” was sometimes used in a negative sense, referring to “bandits” or ungodly people who crossed the Indus River (Thapar, 2005). But over time, the word evolved

into a proud civilisation and religious identity in the Indian subcontinent.

The same applies in the context of "Kirat.". Ancient Hindu scriptures—the Mahabharata and the Puranas—refer to the Kirat as mountain dwellers, in some cases praising their martial prowess (Regmi, 1965). Later, Buddhist and local history accepted them as the ancient inhabitants of the Himalayan region (Pradhan, 2012). But when British colonial ethnographers used "Kirat", they often placed it within their classification of "primitive tribes" (Campbell, 1869). But the outward classification does not erase the tribal traditions associated with the Kirat and its deep cultural meaning.

In other words, the identity of “Kirat” belongs to its inhabitants—not to outsiders who temporarily abuse it. Therefore, abandoning Kirat based on colonial distortions means surrendering to outsiders rather than reclaiming one's own history.

3. Historical Roots of Kirat Identity

The relationship between Limbu and Kirat is not a colonial invention; it has its roots in the deep history of South Asia. The Kirat dynasty ruled the Kathmandu Valley way before the Lichchavis, long before Nepali history (Regmi, 1965; Whelpton, 2005). The oral traditions of Limbuwan, more specifically that of Mundhum, depict Limbu to be in the cultural continuum of the ancient past, where various clans and lineages merged into a larger Kirat culture (Subba, 1999).

The Limbus' internal tradition classifies their origins into two categories:

i) Khambongba (Kashi dynasty)
ii) Tangsangba (Mongolic descent)
iii) Labuhan (Sino-Tibetan dynasty)

Such diversity did not deny collective identity; instead, it demonstrated that Kirat was an umbrella framework in which various clans coexisted and intermingled. By just dividing the Kirat and depicting the Limbu as an independent people, we drastically reduce the extent of their history and blank out long links.

4. Kirat: A mark of pride, not humiliation

What critics often overlook is that many Rai, Limbu and Sunuwar communities proudly call themselves “Kirat”. To them, this is not a colonial imposition at all but a symbol of unity, and one that links them with positive ancestral peerage, religious oral tradition and the special Nepali history to pose (Subba, 1999; Chemjong, 2003).

Even in religious and ritualistic life, the identity of Kirat is established in a positive sense:

Kirat is remembered as a human being who maintains a deep connection with nature, spirits, and ancestors (Gaenszle, 2000).

Kirat Mundhum explains the cosmic structure, moral values, and rituals that set them apart from the Hindu and Buddhist frameworks but coexist with them (Chemjong, 2003).

The Kirat community celebrates festivals like Ubhauli and Udhauli as a celebration of agriculture, ecological balance, and spiritual harmony (Tumbahang, 2011).

It is therefore clear that when the Kirat community itself speaks of this identity, it is not pejorative. To call it merely “colonial” or “imposed from the outside” is to ignore their voice—a voice that still affirms it as a source of honour and pride.

5. Decolonization: Reclaiming, Not Erasing

The intellectual movement of decolonisation encourages communities to resist the categories imposed by colonial powers. But the approach to completely erasing the word or label of colonisation is wrong.

The decolonisation trend urges societies to reject social and cultural categories meddled with by other people (Smith, 2012). However, it is unlikely that we can completely discard such words or labels. True decolonisation means reclaiming those words on their own terms and meanings.

Regarding the Limbu and the Kirat, during the British colonial period the term "Kirat" was often used as a classification of "primitive tribes" or outliers

(Campbell, 1869). But the Limbu and other Kirat tribes proudly called themselves “Kirat”. By decolonising, in this case, the Kirat people aim to reappropriate the word to create a positive definition of the term according to its culture, history and spirituality.

Therefore, dropping or discarding the usage of the word 'Kirat' simplifies a man's history and, conversely, reinforces the identity and pride of the community by reinstating this word.

There are other examples of this:

When Africans first used the word “Black” in a negative sense, they felt insulted by the word and saw it as a symbol of social injustice (Fanon, 1963). But in the Black Consciousness and Civil Rights Movement, they reclaimed the word in a positive sense, linking it to their identity and pride. It demonstrates that the community can transform the bad label imposed upon it by external forces into its own terms and pride.

Native Americans also knew that the slur "Indian" or "Native" was used with malice. However, at a later time, they redefined these words and transformed them into emblems of unity and of protest in their own historical, cultural settings (Grande, 2015).

Similarly, outsiders first used the term "Kirat" in a primarily negative or limited sense, which the Kirat people also experienced. Yet, they might retake it as an expression of pride, giving it back its ancient cultural, historical and spiritual meaning. When the term is

completely discarded, however, there looms the potentiality of historiographical disintegration and a sense of identity incompleteness – particularly among groups such as the Limbu, who have never really been anything but part of the greater Kirat world.

6. Without Kirat, Limbu's identity is incomplete

The Limbu identity, language (Yaktungpan), script (Sirijonga), and scriptures (Mundhum) are inseparable entities. The Limbu and adjacent groups, like the Rai and the Yakkha, have a long history of interrelationships in terms of customs, ecological views, and warfare (Gaenszle, 2000; Subba, 1999). With no mention of the Kirat linkage of the Limbus, there is a danger of painting them as a mere tribal entity and not part of the greater civilisational flow.

Kirat also provides Limbus history. It connects them to the Himalayan cultural mosaic and their region (Limbuwan). This puts the Limbu into the context of Nepali history (as the Kirat kingdom is remembered as an old kingdom) and South Asia, with the Kirat known within Sanskrit and Buddhist literature (Regmi, 1965; Whelpton, 2005).

To ignore Kirat is to show only part of Limbu's history. To embrace Kirat is to acknowledge both difference and connection and to present historical reality in a balanced way. It presents the Limbu community not as an isolated tribe, but as an integral part of the larger Kirat world and Nepali and Himalayan history.

7. No clan or identity is superior forever

An important philosophical view is that no race, religion or culture is forever superior. Emperors go up and down; the meaning shifts; names are reshaped to suit the time and the environment. Thus, it is more productive to view or even accept history in a pluralistic or pluralist form rather than harbouring illusions about purity and superiority.

The Limbu community embodies this pluralism. Their lineage system reflects different ethnic and cultural origins—Kashi, Mongol, and Sino-Tibetan—but all together they form one unified group (Chemjong, 2003). The broad Kirat identity also provides an example of how unity can be maintained without erasing internal diversity. The result has been the resilience that has not only made Kirat a colonial remnant but also a tough and astounding identity.

8. Conclusion

Attempts to separate Limbu from Kirat in the name of colonialism misunderstand both history and identity. Though the term 'Kirat' was used by the colonial and state actors, it goes back to indigenous traditions, scriptures and social perceptions. Nowadays a significant number of Limbu and Rai indignantly identify themselves as Kirat; the term is not offensive but more of a semblance of survivability.

Limbu identity is incomplete without Kirat. To separate the two is to erase centuries of cultural ties and historical depth.

True decolonisation is not abandoning the Kirat but rather reclaiming it from within remeaning it according to one's own interpretation and affirming it as a proud heritage. Just as the word "Hindu", “Black” or “Indian” were transformed from an outwardly negative label to a source of civilisational pride, "Kirat" can be reclaimed as a sacred and unifying identity for the Limbu and their associated communities.

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12. Kirat-Limbu: Historical Honesty and Inclusiveness

Introduction

The history of the ethnic customs and language of the Himalayan land closely connects the names 'Kirat' and 'Limbu'. In the scenario of the emergence of Limbuwan during the sixth century, certain historians (Chemjong, 1966; Subba, 1995) indicated that the Kirat state was defeated and a new political system was established by the Limbu group. Some scholars have also described this phenomenon as an expansionist or colonial activity. But linguistic, cultural, oral and archaeological evidence shows that the Limbu group is an integral part of the "Kirat civilization".

To understand the relationship between Kirat civilisation and Limbu identity, both approaches (the story of winner-loser and continuation of common civilization) should be studied together.

Some scholars see the fact that the Tibet-Burmese-speaking group from north Tibet conquered the Kirat state in the 6th century and created Limbuwan as political expansionism or colonialism. According to this interpretation, the separate state formation of the Limbus has been presented as an illustration of cultural dominance and expansion of power (Subba, 1999).

But linguistic, verbal, cultural, and archaeological evidence presents a different picture. The language of the Limbus (Yakthungpan) belongs to

the Tibeto-Burmese family and bears common characteristics with Kirat languages, including Rai, Yakkha, and Sunuwar (van Driem, 2001). Oral scriptures such as Mundhum and the Syringa script are a continuation of the Kirat tradition, which makes the Limbu community an integral part of a unified "Kirat civilization" rather than an isolated one (Gaenszle, 2000).

Thus, despite explaining conquest and expansion, the long-term linguistic, cultural, and religious interrelationships show that the identity of the Limbus is not isolated but internalized within the continuum of a common Kirat civilization.

Linguistic evidence

In linguistic background, the Limbu language is one of the members of the Tibeto-Burmese family that are termed as the "Kirat group" by Hodgson (1847). According to Van Driem (1997), the relationship between the languages of Limbu, Rai, Sunuwar, Yakha, etc. is now clear. It is based on these linguistic similarities that shared origins and long-term interactions begin.

Oral Tradition and Mundhum

The Mundhum tradition of Limbu and the oral tradition of Rai-Sunuwar-Yakha, etc., have a similar mythological structure. Ancestor worship, deity and nature worship, animal sacrifice rituals, and life cycle rites—all of these practices seem to have structural similarities (Chemjong, 1975; Subba, 1999). This

evidence confirms the cultural intermingling between Kirat and Limbu.

Historical intermingling

The Lichchavi inscriptions mention the "Kirat country," which attests to the ancient settlements and cultural areas of the Kirats. Even after the rise of Limbuwan, blood and cultural intermingling continued. Thus, there appears to be a long-term common identity-building (ethnogenesis), not just victory-replacement.

Continuity of cultural practice

To this day, similar festivals and rituals are celebrated among the Kirat community, such as nature worship, ancestor worship, and seasonal festivals (Chasok-Tangnam, Sakela, and Udhauli/Ubhauli). Despite the differences in names, the structure and purpose remain the same. This process reinforces "Kirat" as a cultural umbrella identity.

Political-social context

Modern Nepal's federal structure and identity politics have intensified the re-creation of historical names. The use of "Limbu" alone obscures the wider Kirat history; using only "Kirat" threatens to lose Limbu's uniqueness. Therefore, using the term "Kirat-Limbu" ensures that both historical accuracy and political-social inclusivity are maintained.

Conclusion

Linguistic, cultural, oral and historical evidence indicates that the use of "Kirat-Limbu" is appropriate. It neither rejects the Kirat culture nor erases Limbu's unique identity. Rather, integrating the two balances both pre-colonial historical truth and the inclusive politics of the present. Therefore, the use of "Kirat-Limbu" is satisfactory both educationally and socially.

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Brief Q&A: Development of Anti-Colonial Thought

1. On the basis of Prithvi Narayan Shah's lalmohar, can it be said that "Kirat" is only Rai and not Limbu?

That assumption is not correct. In the lalmohar of Prithvi Narayan Shah, sometimes the Limbu of Arun Purba is also written as "Rai," which creates confusion. But that was not local self-identification; it was the administrative approach of the Gorkhali rulers. Sometimes the word "Rai" was used for the general Kirat tribe, sometimes even in the sense of rank or title. Therefore, it would be historically wrong to say that "Kirat is only Rai, not Limbu" on the basis of the inconsistent classification seen in Lalmohar. Limbu is a key member of the Kirat family, as oral traditions, mundhum, and other sources show.

2. Is the word 'Kirat' a colonialistic manner of abuse?

No. The term has very old historic roots, as it first appeared in Vedic texts, the Mahabharata, or Puranas, and Hindu-Buddhist literature. According to it, the Kirat are referred to as a marauding race of people inhabiting the hills and using bows and preying in the forest (Sharma, 1993). The name Kirat, so far as it is an expression, seems to be founded upon Hindu-Buddhist sources and is therefore not an Islamic or Persian offensive definition. In some cases, it has also been described as heroic and skilled in combat skills.

Therefore, it cannot be called a word brought only by the colony.

3. Did the British and Gorkhali colonial rulers portray Kirat as "underdeveloped" or "wild"?

Yes. The British and Gorkhali rulers described the Kirats in their records as an ancient and "underdeveloped" tribe. This approach comes from outside administration and political evaluation. Not just negative labels; the records also reflect the bias created by cultural, linguistic and social distance from society.

4. What is decolonisation?

Decolonisation is the process of reclaiming one's own history, identity, and knowledge by rejecting the perspectives, classifications, and power structures imposed by outsiders during the colonial period (Smith, 2012).

5. Did the word "Kirat" originate only during the colonial period?

No. The word "kirat" did not originate only during the colonial period. Its roots can be traced back to ancient Hindu and Buddhist texts, where Kirats are mentioned as a community living in the Himalayan region (Regmi, 1965). Later, although colonial writers classified it as a "primitive tribe", it was an outward view. But this does not mean that the word 'Kirat' was imposed by the colony. Rather, its use has been redefined by Aboriginal communities in the past and today as their source of pride, tradition, and history.

6. What does the word 'Kirat' in the Limbu and Rai linguistic groups mean in aspects of culture and history?

For a considerable number of Limbu, Rai, and Yakthung people, they are Kirats. It combines shared cultural memory, myth, and glorious history. Therefore, if it is discarded as a "word imposed by the colony,", the common identities of Limbu and Rai will be incomplete or in danger of being broken. Rather, it is appropriate to redefine the name Kirat as a proud history from a colonial-free point of view.

7. Why is it appropriate to write Kirat Limbu/Yakthung?

Redefining the word "kirat" on the basis of scientific, historical, and cultural evidence is a process of liberation from colonial influence. It covers not only Limbu/Yakthung but also the entire Kirat community, including Rai, Sunuwar, and Yakha/Yakhthumba. Therefore, the combined use of "Kirat-Limbu/Yakthung" is considered appropriate.

The use of the word "Kirat" does not create any hindrance in the journey of Limbu society towards colonial liberation. This may partially obscure the Limbu identity in some cases, but acknowledging the larger nature of Kirat and explaining the uniqueness of Limbu is the main process of actual colonial liberation. That is, restoring the historical identity of pre-colonial by uniting both Kirat and Limbu/Yakthung is the way to build a long-term and strong identity.

Just as people mention the names of their father and grandfather to introduce themselves, presenting Limbu's historical background without breaking it reflects honesty towards history.

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Author Profile

Dr. Nawa Raj Subba is a researcher, writer, and thinker moving across disciplinary and cultural boundaries. With a doctorate, he was trained in a rigorous academic environment, but my broader intellectual journey is fueled by an abiding interest in the human condition.

His research focuses on the oral traditions of the Kirat Limbu peoples—particularly the Tungdunge Mundhum—and their intersections with contemporary issues of the time, which include mental health, cultural identity, and social transformation. His work tries to create dialogue by bringing a more subtle and sustained observation of the world, something that has been overlooked, and by reframing it in light of modern frameworks so multiple frames for understandings of well-being and knowledge become possible.

As a writer, he is not only grappling with empirical research but also philosophical reflection, narrative, and cultural analysis. His work addresses scholarly and public audiences and aims to raise questions, prompt reflection, and contribute to conversations about justice, meaning, and human life.

A thinker is an identity that resonates with a lifelong inquiry and synthesis between disciplines of knowledge as well as rendering ideas that stir waters

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His works on literature, music, and social science:

Anthologies of Poems (Books)

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- *Bich Batoma Byujhera* (2065)
- *Yatra Adha Satabdiko* (2068)
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Collections of Lyrics (Books)

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Book Introduction

History isn't just about books. It reads us, reminds us, makes us. It is still clear in Nepal, where Nepali society has been formed by combining countless languages, cultures, and lifestyles. Our indigenous communities have carried their traditions for thousands of years, but those knowledge and song-story rituals have largely disappeared. Some are lost, some are mixed with other religions and cultures, and some are left in pieces.

It is this silence that this book seeks to speak of "Forgotten Songs and Lost Identities: An Investigation of Indigenous Experiences." It's not just a myth or a passionate reminder. The piece represents decades of research that has incorporated oral interviews, field visits, old relics, and voices of the elderly in the community. This demonstrates: To know our origins, we need not only read the state-written history, but we need also to hear the voices that are buried in this earth.

Nepal's history is often written from the point of view of power. He who had the kingdom in his hand used a pen. In the process, indigenous traditions were interpreted as backward traditions, or mixed with powerful religions, or completely erased. The gods of Kirat were sometimes associated with Shiva, sometimes with Buddhist or Christian traditions. The names and meanings of the local holy places changed. It undermined not just religion, but the entire identity. And when identity is lost, self-esteem, memory, and the power to make the future are also lost.

The book is in three parts. The first part deals with the relationship between Bon religion and the Kirat tradition. This shows that Nepal's civilization is not only the result of Aryan culture, its roots are even older. Words and language are the evidence of that.

The second part is about transformation and resistance. From the Lichchavi period to Gorkha unification, the Kirat identity was suppressed but not completely lost. Oral narratives, old relics, and community struggles show that even before Hinduism or Buddhism came, local communities had their own sacred geography. The resistance of the Limbu community, in particular, shows that preserving culture is not only about preserving songs, it is also protecting lives.

The third section is on colonial-free thinking. This shows that the contemporary native people are recovering their identities. Defining names in a new way. Even other Limbus have started concentrating on the word Yakthung as an identity rather than Kirat. Much has been said about how this situation came up. There are disagreements and debates. There has been a major struggle between maintaining a balance between preserving a fundamental identity and accepting a shared history. The book attempts to discuss and conclude the two ideas.

What makes this research special is not just facts, but hidden emotions in it. When the old people of the village remembered the old songs or told them the customs, they felt the pain of the injuries they had suffered. The memory was not just an individual but a collective wound. As I wrote, the author felt as if I were not just researching, but holding threads that I didn't want to lose.

Ultimately, this book stands on the foundation of both remembrance and solicitation. The history of Nepal is not only Aryan, Hindu, Buddhist or Christian, but also that of indigenous peoples. And request, is that we all remember, and think of it anew, and share the chance of making a future. The songs that have been lost are still ringing in the air. The lost identities are still alive in resistance and somewhere they are struggling. The question is simply—are we ready to listen to them?